

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION DURING  
THE ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE: A MIXED-METHODS APPROACH**

A research report submitted to the

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by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Mergers have become a common feature for South African organisations since the dawn of democracy in 1994. There are several studies completed internationally and locally on how to handle mergers in general. There is limited research however on the role played by communication in this process. In this regard, this study aims to analyse the role of communication during a merger in an information communication technology (ICT) organisation, underpinned by Nudge's Change Theory, which asserts that employees should be involved in the merger process, thereby making it possible to take their views into consideration.

Quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed in this study to gain insight on the role communication plays before, during, and after a merger. Primary data was collected from employees based at the organisation's Head Office in Pretoria, through online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis was used to analyse data.


Results of the study show that communication with employees before, during and after merger was poor, resulting in high levels of uncertainty among employees. Furthermore, management did not provide adequate feedback to employees during the process. This caused panic among employees and a lack of confidence in the success of the merger. Based on these findings, it is recommended that top management investigates ways of enhancing channels of communication to ensure that communication with employees during mergers is not only meaningful but effective. The findings confirm recommendations made by Nudge's Change Theory of the need to equip both management and employees during times of uncertainty. In this regard, further research to be conducted with different companies in the sector on the role employee communication plays during mergers to see if similar perceptions are maintained or changed.

## **KEY WORDS:**

Organisational communication, Communication strategy, Employee communication, Organisational change, Change communication, Mergers and acquisitions.

## DECLARATION

I, Puleng David Dikgale, declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in the partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Arts in Communications degree at the University of South Africa, UNISA. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university or educational institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P.D. Dikgale', enclosed within an oval shape.

**Dikgale P.D.**

01 September 2020

**Date**

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

AMCS	After Merger Communication Satisfaction
AMOI	After Merger Organisational Identification
BMCS	Before Merger Communication Satisfaction
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CHART	Continuous Improvement, Honest, Accountable, Responsible and Teamwork
DMCS	During Merger Communication Satisfaction
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resources Management
IaaS	Infrastructure as a Service
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
IoT	Internet of Things
IS	Internet Services
IT	Information Technology
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
M&A	Merger and Acquisition
PaaS	Platform as a Service
SaaS	Software as a Service
USA	United States of America
VPN	Virtual Private Network

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Mergers have become a common feature for South African organisations since the dawn of democracy in 1994. There are several studies completed internationally and locally on how to handle mergers in general. There is limited research however on the role played by communication in this process. In this regard, this study aims to analyse the role communication played during the merger in an information communication technology (ICT) organisation.

This chapter provides an introduction and background to the study, the aim of the research, objectives, the research problem, as well as the methodology used to conduct the research. Research questions that the study seeks to answer are also stated in this chapter. The chapter ends with a brief discussion on how ethical issues were managed and the outline of the dissertation.

#### **1.2 Background and context of the study**

Understanding employees' experiences with communication during the merger process is crucial as it is viewed by authors as the main reason why mergers succeed or fail (Risberg 2013:144; Aguilera & Dencker 2004). Effective employee communication during mergers helps to reduce uncertainty, guide the organisation through the transition period and enhances the degree of employee commitment to the new organisation after the merger (Allatta & Singh 2011). On the other hand, when communication is not effective during a merger, employees feel that their jobs are not secure, their level of trust reduces and this may lead to overall negativity regarding the merger process (Aguilera & Dencker 2004).

The main purpose of the study is to critically analyse the role of employee communication during organisational change. The study was conducted at BCX, an entity that was formed after Telkom Business/Enterprise and Business Connexion were merged, situated in Centurion, Gauteng.

The merger of the two organisations happened in 2016 after the approval by the Competition Tribunal of South Africa, an independent adjudicative body established in terms of section 26 of the Competition Act, Act No.89 of 1998. The mandate of this tribunal is to regulate (a), mergers and acquisitions (b), prohibited practices such as anti-competitive conduct (South Africa 1998:sec 223). International and local trends on Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A) are discussed in Chapter 2 of this study.

As a current employee at BCX, the researcher is interested in this analysis with the aim of providing insights to the organisation on how communication happened during the merger. According to Li, Qiu and Shen (2018), a supportive Human Resources Management (HRM) department is needed when two or more organisations merge. This is because mergers affect the culture of the organisation, which includes communication and the human resource management department as a custodian of the organisation's culture (Elsmore 2018; Den Hartog & Verburg 2005).

The involvement of the human resources department will ensure that employees who are affected by the merger process receive support and are made aware of the implications involved (Stahl & Mendelhall 2005; Terry Callan & Carey 2001). Employee involvement and effective communication still proves to be a major problem facing mergers, both internationally and locally. Recent studies on mergers support this by stressing the importance of communication during organisational change, such as a merger (Schweiger & Denisi 1991; Whalen 2002:88; Kramer, Dougherty & Pierce 2004). Research also found that during the merger process, employees intend to leave the organisation as a result of low-decision latitude, reduced promotional opportunities and weak communication (Brown, Zijlstra & Lyons 2006).

During mergers, concerns about job satisfaction become an emotional reaction that affects the employees' well-being and have significant consequences for their social lives (Sempene, Rieger & Roodt 2002:24). There is limited research that addresses employee communication during the three phases of the merger process namely before, during and after the merger. This study seeks to address this gap that exists in literature by describing and exploring the role of employee communication at a merged South African organisation.

Telkom SA's key strategy is to be a leader in the converged ICT market through deep and credible relationships and a distinctive customer experience. Telkom aims to achieve this strategy by (a), leading in converged solutions (b), providing a quality network with unmatched reach (c), offering end-to-end digital solutions in the business community (d), creating innovative and pervasive broadband consumer services (e), being the wholesale provider of choice and (f) being the best place for committed and accountable people to work. The Group Strategy department is responsible for the formulation and execution of the organisation's strategy.

BCX is an ICT organisation that provides Information Technology and Telecommunication services to customers in different market segments such as mining, public sector, education and the financial sector (Business Connexion 2019). The success of BCX in engaging and keeping the relationship with these customers hinges on its ability to manage employee communication. This is critical as employees are the interface between BCX and their customers.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

Walliman (2011) states that the research problem is a general statement that guides the formulation of a research project by highlighting the problem or issue that merits the project. Agreeably, Monette, Sullivan and DeJong (2008) state that the research problem is the first step in the research process that provides the foundation of the study. If formulated well, the research problem allows the researcher to define what the study seeks to investigate (Hofstee 2006).

Previous studies on organisational communication emphasised the significance of post-merger communication (Allatta & Singh 2011; Epstein 2004; Dooley & Zimmerman 2000). Effective post-merger communication enhances employee trust and collective tasks. It also helps with the identification of the new organisation (Elstak, Bhatt, Riel, Pratt & Berens 2015; Lawlor 2013; Bijlsma-Frankema 2001). If this is not the case, employees may have doubts about the future of the organisation after the merger, and this may lead to a high churn rate (Van Dick, Ullrich & Tissington 2006).

However, the researcher could not find studies on employee communication during the three distinct phases of the merger process, before, during and after. Based on the above background, the researcher is of the view that there is a need for research on the role of employee communication during organisational change. The study could assist in the generation of new knowledge that would assist merging organisations to make necessary changes regarding employee communication. The study also aims to provide recommendations on possible future studies. The research problem is as follows: There is not enough information on employee communication during organisational change.

#### **1.4 Aims and objectives of the study**

Several studies have been conducted on the discipline of organisational communication during organisational change such as M&As (Papadakis 2005; Pioch 2007; Shook & Roth 2011; Weber, Rachman-Moore & Tarba 2012). When merging organisations, the need to put employee communication at the centre of the merger strategy is necessitated by the drive to enhance and improve the relevance and competitive advantage in a fierce market environment (Waddell, Creed, Cummings & Worley 2016; Tavana, Szabat & Puranam 2017).

Including employees as part of the organisation's communication strategy is important during the change process because "organisations relying on human beings to create and deliver products and services lose serious money and see productivity eroded when errors in communication are made" (Herdt 2013:58). The specific objectives of this study are listed below:

- To explore the communication strategy that was used during the merger.
- To describe the internal stakeholders' level of satisfaction with communication channels used during the merger.
- To explore the stakeholders' perspective of communication during the merger.

## **1.5 Research questions**

According to Alvesson and Sandberg (2013:7), research questions are defined as statements of the study that "not only indicate the delivery of a specific intended result", but also provide a broader focusing of the study. From this definition it is noted that the main purpose of the research question is to (a), give major inputs (b), frame the research study and (c), provide direction to the research study. Therefore, the questions form a fundamental element of the research process. This means that research questions should be formulated in a way that generates answers that seek to solve the identified problem. O'Leary (2018:14) agrees by stating that "a well-defined, well-articulated research question will act as a blueprint" for the researcher's project. This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What was the communication strategy used during the merger?
- What was the internal stakeholders' level of satisfaction with communication channels used during the merger?
- How did internal stakeholders perceive communication during the merger?

## **1.6 Research assumptions**

Available studies conducted both locally and internationally over the past two decades indicate that the concept of organisational change has become a common feature for organisations aiming to have a competitive edge during the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Naidoo 2009; Noora 2014; Jonsson 2018). According to Bezuidenhout (2008), this change is necessitated by the need for organisations to create lasting relationships and build sustainable brand reputations with their stakeholders. Organisational change takes different forms such as M&As and conglomerates (Sullivan, Grimes & Sagers 2015; Stahl & Mendelhall 2005).

The main problem during this type of organisational change is employee communication. When an organisation goes through a M&A, employees are often left in the dark in terms of why the merger is necessary, what the future holds for them, and most importantly, the assurance from management that their jobs will be secured after the merger process (Hiatt 2006).



## **1.7 Research methodology**

A detailed discussion on the methodology used for this study is provided in Chapter 4. To answer the research questions mentioned earlier in this chapter, a mixed-methods design was used. The nature of this design is both descriptive and explorative, as it attempts to analyse through online questionnaires and face-to-face interviews, how employees feel about communication during the merger process. The method of using both online questionnaires (quantitative) and face-to-face interviews (qualitative) is referred to by authors as mixed method approach (Bergman 2008; Creswell 2014). According to Vicki, Clark and Ivankova (2015). This method is used when researchers integrate quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, with the aim to better understand the research problem. Furthermore, data collected and analysed using a mixed methods approach, which uses both quantitative and qualitative methods, "provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (Creswell & Plano-Clark 2007:5).

It is worth noting that many researchers resist the use of mixed methods approaches because making high quality inferences from mixed methods may seem too demanding (Salem 2004). In this study, the researcher deemed the use of mixed methods approach important because organisational communication is such a complex phenomenon and is very difficult to understand when using one single method. This is because mixed-methods "provide strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research" (Creswell & Plano-Clark 2011:12).

### **1.7.1 The research population**

According to Jha (2014), the research population refers to the group being studied, that has specific traits, which are of interest to the researcher and are related to the research. This group may comprise of objects, material, people or documents as per the requirement of what is being studied. In its simplest form, the term population in research means the total number of objects or individuals to which the study generalisation may apply (Borg & Gall 1989). Research population is classified in two ways: (a) target population and (b) accessible population (Sim & Wright 2000). This classification is discussed below:

### **1.7.1.1 Target population**

According to Sim and Wright (2000:111), a target population is "the collection of cases in which the researcher is ultimately interested" and to which generalisations of the study are to be made. The target population in this study refers to all 5200 employees of the merged organisation.

### **1.7.1.2 Accessible population**

Accessible population refers to the portion of the target population that the researcher has access to for the specific purpose of the study (Sim & Wright 2000). It is from this accessible population that the sample of the study is drawn. Accessible population for this study is 2000 employees located at the organisation's Head Office in Centurion, Gauteng.

### **1.7.2 Sampling**

Sampling is "the process of selecting units, for example people and organisations from a population of interest" (Warwick-Booth Cross & Lowcock 2012), so that by studying them, a fair generalisation of the results may be arrived at. Since researchers deploy different methodologies in their studies such as quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, or triangulation, it is important to carefully determine the samples as these are related closely to a research methodology (Emmel 2013).

This study deployed both the quantitative and qualitative methods, hence a mixed methods approach; probability (random) sampling and non-probability (purposive) sampling were used. For qualitative data collection, purposive sampling was used. Liamputtong (2013:14) describes purposive sampling as "the deliberate selection of specific individuals, events or settings because of crucial information they provide that cannot be obtained so well through other channels". This study was interested in the rich and in-depth information that the participants would provide in advancing the objective of the study. To achieve this, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with six (6) purposely selected participants. Participants were selected due to their extensive experience in the organisation. Although ten (10) participants were initially invited to participate, only six (6) participated, the other four (4) could not participate due to leave and other organisational engagements.

For quantitative data collection (online questionnaires), random sampling was used where questionnaires were sent to 241 employees' email addresses obtained from the Human Resource (HR) department. Section 4.3.4 explains how the number 241 was determined.

### **1.7.3 Data collection instruments**

Punch (2004) states that data collection instruments are procedures to be used in collecting research data. These include questionnaires, standardised measuring instruments, ad hoc rating scales or observation schedules. Since this study deploys a mixed-methods approach, two data collection instruments were used. Online questionnaires were used for the quantitative approach, while face-to-face interviews were used for the qualitative approach. Questionnaires are data instruments consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (Remenyi 2013).

On the other hand, *interview* instruments were used to collect data by asking participants specific questions (Edwards & Hollands 2013). Data was collected by listening to participants, recording their responses where permission was granted to do so and coding their responses. It is worth noting that with these two forms of instruments, individuals are referred to differently. This is because individuals for quantitative studies are referred to as respondents as they respond to questionnaire statements, while individuals for qualitative studies are referred to as participants, as they participate in answering interview questions (Pope & Mays 2013).

*Online questionnaires:* Collecting data by using online questionnaires remains one of the most commonly used and preferred methods by quantitative researchers (Couper 2000). In this study, questionnaire statements were structured in a way that draws respondents to provide information regarding their communication experiences before, during and after the merger occurred.

*Interviews:* Conducting interviews is viewed by researchers as one of the best ways of collecting rich qualitative data (Creswell 2009). Chapter 4, Section 4.3.6 discusses types of interviews and the differences. For this study, the researcher used face-to-face semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data.

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has more flexibility to add questions and ask for clarifications on questions that are not adequately answered (Galletta & Cross 2013). Semi-structured interviews facilitate the collection of personal data, with participants feeling more comfortable and relaxed, making the interview more of a conversation rather than a calculated interrogation of questions and answers (Flick 2009). This allows the researcher to explore questions in greater depth.

#### **1.7.4 Data analysis**

Since the study employs a mixed-methods approach, descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyse data collected through online questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. According to Vogt, Vogt, Gardner and Haeffele (2014), descriptive statistics refer to methods used to portray the cases in a collection of quantitative data, depicting patterns in those data to explore the distribution or shapes of the data to summarise the basic features of the data. On the other hand, thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun 2013:121). Thematic analysis is the first qualitative method that should be learned as "it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis" (Braun & Clarke 2006:78).

#### **1.8 Validity and reliability**

According to Altheide and Johnson (1994), validity refers to the truthfulness of the research findings, whereas reliability refers to the stability of the findings. Singh (2014) asserts that validity and reliability increase the transparency of the research findings. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) confirm the importance of research validity and reliability, by stating that they enhance the accuracy of the assessment and evaluation of the research work. Without assessing the validity and reliability of the research, researchers will find it difficult to describe the effects of measurement, errors on theoretical relationships being measured (Forza 2002).

## **1.9 Feasibility of the study**

According to Begun and Gregorie (2014), feasibility refers to an analysis and evaluation of a proposed project to determine if it is (a) technically feasible, (b) feasible in terms of estimated costs, and (c) profitable. The researcher was granted funding in the form of a bursary by the University of South Africa. The funding was to be used to cover costs related to data collection and statistical analysis, editing, copying and printing.

## **1.10 Ethical considerations for the study**

The researcher collected data by using online questionnaires and conducting face-to-face interviews with employees at BCX Head Office in Centurion, Gauteng. This process required the researcher to consider ethical issues pertaining to respondents' online questionnaires and participants' face-to-face interviews (Kruger Ndebele & Horn 2014). According to Wiles (2013), ethics in research deal with issues such as ensuring that permission is granted by individuals participating in the study. These issues include anonymity, privacy, and protection from any potential harm (Jensen 2002). Authors agree that every step taken by the researcher in conducting a study requires assurance that the study is conducted in an ethical manner (Resnik 1998; Alderson 2004; Israel & Hay 2006).

## **1.11 Limitations of the study**

This study focuses on respondents' and participants' views, perceptions and opinions regarding employee communication during the merger process or during organisational change. Only respondents and participants situated at the organisation's Head Office in Centurion, Gauteng, took part in this study. It is for this reason that the researcher is in no way making a claim that this study is generalisable and that the findings are applicable to all South African merged organisations in the ICT industry. The researcher however holds the view that the findings of the study could be transferred to other organisations operating within the ICT space. In addition, the study was structured to specifically seek in-depth understanding of employee communication during the merger process so that change can be effectively managed.

The study was not comparable to any other study available, since this could not have adequately addressed the concern about employee communication during the merger process.

## **1.12 Delimitation of the study**

The following delimitations for the study were identified:

### ***1.12.1 Geographic and organisational delimitation***

This study was only conducted at the merged organisation's Head Office situated in Centurion, Gauteng, South Africa. The organisation provides both telecommunication and IT solutions within South African and across other African continents.

### ***1.12.2 Subject-related delimitation***

The study primarily focused on the role of employee communication during organisational change. Collected data related to communication at three phases of the merger process which is ,before, during and after.

## **1.13 Significance and relevance of the study**

The study has both practical and theoretical significance in that it seeks to enhance understanding in the field, particularly on the role employee communications play when organisations go through organisational changes. The study also provides practical insights which BCX can use to improve employee communication going forward. Though this study cannot be generalised, its findings can be used to establish the most appropriate communication strategy for future envisaged M&As within the ICT industry. The study can also be used as literature and a source of knowledge that informs merging organisations about formulating organisational communication policies that gives guidance on how to keep employees informed during the organisational change process.

## **1.14 Definition of key terms**

The following key terms were used in this study:

### ***1.14.1 Organisational communication***

According to Richmond, McCrisken and McCrisken (2005), the term organisational communication refers to the process whereby individuals working for the same formal organisation, stimulate meaning in the minds of others via verbal or nonverbal messages. There are four key words used in this definition (a) process; meaning that communication is dynamic and ever changing, (b) stimulate meaning; suggesting that it is through people communicating with each other that we develop meaning in what we say, (c) verbal messages; language common to the culture of the organisation, and (d) nonverbal messages transmitted through eye contact, touch, hand gestures, body movements, and facial expressions.

Eisenberg, Goodall and Trethewey (2007) define organisational communication as the way language is used to create different kinds of social structures such as teams, networks and relationships. Additionally, Turner (2013) refers to organisation communication as communication that happens within a complex organisation aimed at the exchange of information and sharing of meaning between the organisation and its employees. This definition is applicable to this study since the communication during the merger entails the exchange of information and sharing of meaning regarding the direction that the organisation takes by merging with another.

### ***1.14.2 Communication strategy***

Communication strategy is a purposeful communication plan designed by a person or organisation with the aim of persuading audiences to gain knowledge, change attitudes or induce desired behaviour (Connolly-Ahern 2008). Steyn & Puth (2000) describe communication strategy as a plan that establishes a framework or profile against which organisational communication decisions are tested by (a) reviewing and questioning the direction taken by the organisation's communication function, and (b) producing a profile that can be utilised to identify organisational communication problems.

The study acknowledges the latter explanation as it includes various stages of the organisation, including the process of organisational change, such as a merger. Section 3.4 provides a discussion on communication strategy and its related elements.

#### ***1.14.3 Employee communication***

Researchers assert that the term employee communication has been synonymously used to refer to internal communication, organisational communication, internal relations, intra-organisational communication and internal public relation (Verčič & Vokić 2017; Smith 2005; Dolphin 2005; Welch 2011). For the purpose of this study, employee communication refers to any form of formal communication that takes place between management and employees.

#### ***1.14.4 Organisational change***

Organisational change refers to the adaptation of new behaviours and ideas by an organisation with many perspectives on strategic change and organisational development (Choi 2006). Academics state that this change of ideas may occur in a form of introduction to new structure, new technologies, new products, new services, new processes, new systems, or any procedure new to an organisation (Baker & Wruck 1989; Zhou Tse & Li 2006). Liberatore, Hatchuel, Weil and Stylianou (2000) add that organisational change is often accompanied by various reactions, leading to workers changing their capabilities, knowledge, working time, labour relationships, procedures and environment. Agreeably, other researchers opine that this change of ideas may occur in a form of introduction to a new structure, new technologies, new products, new services, new processes, new systems, or any procedure new to an organisation (Baker & Wruck, 1989; Zhou, Tse & Li, 2006).

Ramanathan (2009:25) adds that organisational change is "characterised as a process that unfolds over time, revealing periods of greater and lesser instability, in which the restlessness of a system is an instinctive response toward survival in a continually changing environment".



This definition is applicable to this study as it suggests change as a movement from the present state of the organisation to a desired future state. As mentioned in section 1.2 above, the merging of the two organisations that took place in 2016 signified this type of movement.

#### **1.14.5 Change communication**

Lewis (2011) states that change communication refers to any change-related communicated message that management shares with employees regarding the organisational change or facets of the organisational change. Butcher and Atkinson (2001) add that organisational communication plays a pivotal and positive role during organisational change. Barrett (2002) emphasises the importance of change communication in stating that it can be utilised to reinforce the strategic objectives of the organisational change. Trust relationships between the organisation and its employees is important for the success of a merger process (Stahl, Larsson, Kremershof & Sitkin 2011; Chen & Tjosvold 2006).

According to Hodges (2008:1024), when the organisation consistently communicates with its employees about goals and strategies it intends to implement, employees feel valued and respected, and therefore reduce the possibility of them leaving the organisation. On the other hand, when there is no effective communication about the organisation's strategies and changes, the organisation may be unsettled by issues such as (a) level of anxiety, (b) uncertainty, (c) low employee morale, (d) employee performance, (e) employee turnover and (f) absenteeism. The next section discusses these issues as reviewed in literature.

*Level of anxiety:* Authors opine that employee anxiety remains one of the factors experienced across almost all major stages, that is before, during and after a change (Venzin, Vizzaccaro & Rutschmann 2018; Steynberg & Veldsman 2011). Change can be very stressful to employees and may generate feelings of fear and uncertainty. While some employees thrive on change, others may feel threatened by what they perceive the change to bring (Schweiger 2002). Studies show that during the change process, there is often evidence of employees' fear of the future rather than the actual change itself (Brown 2011; Erturk 2008: 465; Elving 2005).

This level of anxiety and fear can be curbed by effective communication during the merger stages. It is true that when employees are kept in the dark regarding developments within the organisation, they may be more anxious about the future, and this may lead to uncertainty.

*Uncertainty:* Goyel and Joshi (2012:235) observe that lack of effective communication during organisational change may result in employees experiencing uncertainty due to the new culture, new management style and a new environment, which may lead to them being less interested in their work. According to Meinert (2017), uncertainty among employees may be created by rumours and the grapevine. It is for this reason that merging organisations should make a concerted effort to communicate changes that may be experienced as a result of the merger (Weber, Rachman-Moore & Tarba 2012; Brahma & Srivastava 2007:9). When a merger is communicated, levels of uncertainty decrease and this could lead to improved post-merger performance (Weber et al 2012). This means that effective communication is crucial to alleviate any form of uncertainty during a merger process.

*Low employee morale:* According to Vasantham (2014:2), employee morale refers to the total satisfaction that the employee derives from the job, the prevailing job environment and factors that appeal to individual ambitions. During any change processes, regular communication with key stakeholders, notably employees, is critical (Rubinstein 2011). In most cases, decisions regarding mergers takes long, communication is lacking and employee morale is destroyed in the process. When employee morale is low, it can gradually destroy commitment to the organisation, which negatively affect products and services that the organisation offers, which could alienate the customers that the organisation serves (Eccles, Kersten & Wilson 2001). This may result in employees leaving the organisation for greener pastures in a quest for an organisations that values their patronage (Saeed & Waseem 2014). When this happens, the organisation may find itself spending more time searching for potential candidates to fill the gap that was created by those who left (Munck 2001).

*Employee performance:* Employee performance is the actual results individual employees obtain when measured against its intended goals and objectives (Yaqub 2010). Employee performance has a direct impact on some aspects of the organisation such as (a) financial profits, (b) product market performance, (c)

stakeholder return performance and (d) organisational market share (Andre 2017:210). It is for this reason that effective employee communication should take centre stage, especially during mergers and acquisitions (Mumm & Beuerlein 2004). When employee communication fails, grapevine or office gossip takes over (Karmakar & Datta 2012:350).

*Employee turnover:* Mathis and Jackson (2003) define employee turnover as the movement of employees either inside or outside of the organisation. Staff turnover can be due to a range of factors including organisational change, career opportunities, lack of communication within the organisation and geographical or personal reasons (Straub 2007). Numerous authors assert that management should introduce communication programs that are aimed at reducing uncertainty for employees by keeping them updated with the merger process (Bartels, Douwes, de Jong & Pruyn 2006). This would lead to employees believing that the culture and values of the merged organisation fit well with the one before the merger, therefore strengthening employees' identification with the new (merged) organisation (Cole & Bruch 2006; Chan 2006; Olkkonen & Lipponen 2006).

*Absenteeism:* Lack of effective communication during organisational change has a negative impact on employee behaviour, resulting in counter-productive practices such as absenteeism and job performance (Nikandrou, Papalexandris, & Dimitris 2000). On the other hand, effective employee communication can lessen this negative impact (Etschmaier 2010). Other authors agree that when employees feel that communication does not exist during the merger, they gradually withdraw themselves from the organisation (Griffeth, Hom & Gaetner 2000). When this happens, employees are absent from work more often. Management has an important role to play in ensuring that there is effective communication during the merger to avoid this kind of behaviour (Dahl 2011).

*Mergers and acquisitions:* Sherman and Hart (2006) define a merger as an integration of two or more organisations, in which assets and liabilities of the selling organisation are taken up by the buying organisation. Though the buying organisation may be a different one after the merger, it is expected to retain its original identity. Jagersma (2005) agrees with this definition by adding that the integration of two or more

organisations happen at a strategic level to coordinate strategies, visions, business units and management orientation of the merging firms.

### **1.15 Demarcation of the study**

The study is demarcated in six chapters as shown below:

**Chapter one: Introduction and Background of the study:** This chapter provides an introduction and background to the study, the aim of the research, the research problem, objectives, as well as a brief summary on the methodology used to conduct the research.

**Chapter two: International and local trends on Mergers and Acquisitions:** This chapter discusses the historical development of mergers and acquisitions both locally and internationally.

**Chapter three: The role of employee communication during mergers:** This chapter provides a discussion on the literature reviewed, particularly the theoretical framework that underpins the study.

**Chapter four: Research Methodology:** This chapter discusses the research design as well as the methodology that was used in the study. This includes data collection tools and ethical considerations.

**Chapter five: Presentation of Research Results and Findings:** The chapter discusses how data collected through quantitative and qualitative tools was analysed and interpreted, as well as the results and the findings of the research.

**Chapter six: Conclusions and Recommendations:** The last chapter provides a summary of the research findings and presents recommendations and conclusions from the study.

### **1.16 Chapter summary**

This chapter provided an introduction and background to the study, the aim of the research, the research problem, objectives, as well as the methodology used to conduct the research. The key research questions that the study seeks to answer were also stated in this chapter. Included in the chapter is a brief discussion on how ethical issues were managed and how the study is demarcated. The next chapter looks at global trends on mergers and acquisitions.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL TRENDS ON MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter provided a background and context to the study. To add to this background, this chapter discusses international and local trends in mergers and acquisitions. Mergers and acquisitions continue to be a common facet of modern-day business architecture (Cooper & Finkelstein 2012:11). Organisations both locally and internationally enter into mergers for a variety of strategic reasons (Gregoriou & Renneboog 2007:6). In academic literature, mergers and acquisitions are terms widely used to refer to business tools aimed at increasing market share, diversifying products and services, gaining new skills, increasing operational flexibility, sharing risk, cutting management deadwood and most importantly, increase competitiveness (Pablo & Javidan 2004; Hassan & Ghauri 2014; DePamphilis 2011). Given this understanding, organisations enter into mergers and acquisitions in the quest to become relevant and competitive in the market (DePamphilis 2011).

Different types of mergers and related examples within a South African context are discussed, focusing more on the historical development of mergers globally. The discussion looks at the rationale behind mergers, advantages and disadvantages thereof, and concludes with a detailed discussion on the importance of employee communication during mergers.

#### **2.2 Background and history of mergers**

Different definitions of mergers are provided in this section. Authors observe that some of the factors behind mergers and acquisitions include globalisation and changes in technology and deregulation (Adamsen & Swailes 2008; Schuler & Jackson 2001; Robert, Wallace & Moles 2003). These factors result in mergers and acquisitions expanding into foreign markets (Amoateng 2006). Mergers are aimed at helping organisations to become relevant and competitive.

Previous studies found that mergers and acquisitions often fail (Faelten, Driessen & Moeller 2016; Geiger 2010; Hassan & Ghauri 2007), and the profitability of companies often decline after the merger Bruner (2011). Furthermore, mergers and acquisitions between foreign countries face challenges such as the management of different cultures and people (Adamsen et al 2008; Schuler & Jackson 2001). In the South African context, the merger and acquisition markets are still very small compared to other countries in the world, including some of the emerging markets such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) countries.

### ***2.2.1 Definitions of mergers and acquisitions***

Although the term merger is widely used in conjunction with the term acquisition, this study focuses solely on mergers. It is for this reason that not much is said about acquisitions in this study. However, it is important to make a distinction between the two. According to Pazarskis, Vogiatzoglou, Christodoulou and Drogalas (2006:11), mergers and acquisitions refer to a process followed by established businesses through ownership change, business mix, assets mix and joint ventures with the aim of maximising shareholder value and improving organisational performance. The process of an acquisition often entails a combination of two or more organisations, where only one organisation survives and the other ceases to exist (Gaughan 2002).

Kemal (2011:158) states that mergers are an amalgamation of two or more organisations by way of a purchase or through the common interests that these organisations share, but different from a consolidation where the purchasing organisation continue its operations without the need to create a new entity. Often, as Want (2003) discovered, merged organisations are open to new ways and ideas of doing things. Different types of mergers are explained in detail in sections 2.2.2 of this chapter.

These definitions provide an understanding that when the merger happens, only one organisation continues to exist. This means that the purchased organisation becomes part of the new culture and philosophy and must promptly adopt the purchasing organisation's way of doing things (Ross, Westerfield & Jaffe 2002).

While mergers are a strategic drive for organisations to survive the challenging business environment, they are also life changing events for both the organisations and the employees (Martin & Rood 2008). The transitional process employees go through to come to terms with the changes and the challenges that mergers bring, may have a direct impact on the organisation's performance. Six predominant types of mergers are discussed below:

### **2.2.2 Types of mergers**

Gaughan (2007) states that different types of mergers are (a) horizontal mergers, (b) vertical mergers, (c) conglomerates, (d) product extension, (e) market extension and (f) reverse mergers.

*Horizontal mergers:* According to Pignataro (2015), horizontal mergers happen between competing companies within the same industry. These organisations may be providing similar products or operating at the same level. The main objective of horizontal mergers is to expand the business. Organisations in the same line of business compete for the same share of the market. Examples of horizontal mergers include the merger between two prestigious South African academic institutions, ML Sultan and Technikon Natal in 2002 to become Durban University of Technology (DUT); the merger of two telecommunications giants Nashua and Siemens in 2010, and beverage companies ABI and Coca-Cola merged to become Coca-Cola Beverages Africa Company in 2015.

*Vertical mergers:* According to Gaughan (2007), vertical mergers happen between organisations that have a buyer and seller relationship with each other. This form of merger happens between organisations that operate at different stages of the production chain, or organisations manufacturing complementary or balancing products. An example of this type of merger is that of Merck, a drug manufacturing organisation and Medco Containment Services, a drug distributor that happened in 1993.



*Conglomerate mergers:* Conglomerate mergers happen when the acquiring organisation purchases another organisation that operates in a largely unrelated industry (DePamphilis 2011).

An example of a conglomerate merger is the Foschini Group, a fashion and clothing organisation that purchased other organisations that deal with cosmetic products (colognes and fragrances). This merger happened in 2011.

*Product extension mergers:* Product extension mergers happen between two organisations dealing with related products operating in the same market space (DePamphilis 2012). These mergers allow merging organisations to group together their products to access a bigger customer base. An example of a product extension merger is Broadcom's purchasing of Mobilink Inc. in 2011.

*Market extension mergers:* Market extension mergers happen when two or more organisations sell the same products and services, but are operating in different markets (Pignataro 2015). The purpose of this form of merger is to enable merging organisations to access a bigger market share and a bigger client base. This also ensures that merging organisations enjoy higher profit margins. An example of a market extension merger is RBC Centura's purchasing of Eagle Bancshares Inc. in 2013. These two organisations operate within the banking industry.

*Reverse mergers:* Reverse mergers are transactions that involve a private company that purchases a public traded company, shifting its management into that company (Chen & Ritter 2002). This allows the private company to become publicly traded without having to go through the regulatory and financial processes. Reverse mergers are preferred due to their cost-effectiveness (Chen & Ritter 2002). This form of merger is predominant in the United States of America (USA). Arellano-Ostoa and Brusco (2002:18) investigated reverse mergers that were completed between 1990 and 2000 in the USA stock markets and discovered that these mergers are more cost-effective to facilitate than other forms of mergers.

## **2.3 Historical development of mergers**

Mergers and acquisitions were not a common facet in South Africa until after 1994 (Robinson 2011); the year that marked the dawn of the new democracy. It was only after 1994 that the South African economy opened up to the world, thereby attracting direct foreign investors. Before looking into mergers in the South African context, it is imperative to reflect on historical developments of this phenomenon by looking at the five waves of mergers and acquisitions as observed by Hartford (1999).

There seems to be no general conclusive theory about the concept of mergers and acquisitions. Sudarsanam (2003) discovered that different sector-specific factors triggered a massive development and increase of mergers and acquisitions. Mergers that occurred during different periods across the world are discussed below.

### **2.3.1 Wave 1: 1893-1904**

Known as the "Great Merger Wave", the first wave occurred after a period of economic expansion (Maksimovic & Phillips 2001). Its main characteristic was that it consolidated manufacturers who were operating within the same industry. This led to horizontal mergers among major industries and resulted in the creation of the first merger "giants" in steel, mining and oil industries.

In addition, as Stigler (1950) observed, the creation of horizontal mergers in the USA led to the formation of monopolies where companies would have exclusive control and possession of the supply and trade of specific goods. These monopolies were not good for business as they did not create or allow competition among companies, something that consumers benefit from. This led to the introduction of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, which was aimed at limiting monopolies to create consumer value through competition (Beusch 2007). It is worth noting that this first wave of mergers was characterised by cash financing and friendly deals signed by merging companies. In addition, the development of modern capital as well as the economic expansion, boosted the number of mergers.

This was the case especially during the improvements of the New York Stock exchange which provided access to capital needed for mergers and acquisitions. Like everything else, the wave eventually had to come to an end. This was due to the introduction of stricter laws (Rabbiosi & Bertoni 2012), and the fall of this wave of mergers meant the rise of the second wave of mergers, which is discussed in the next section.

### **2.3.2 Wave 2: 1910-1929**

The second wave of mergers commenced in the 1910s. The main focus of this merger wave was in the food, iron, paper and printing industries. This was however smaller in scale compared to the first wave, which was estimated to have surpassed more than 15% of the total assets in the USA market, whereas the second wave had less than 10% impact in the market (Holmstrom & Kaplan 2001:123). This wave followed the infamous First World War, the time when the world economy was recovering.

During this second wave, there was no domination of one large corporation over the others. Smaller companies who survived the first wave of mergers started to be more active in merger and acquisition transactions (Weston, Mitchell & Mulherin 2004). Like the first wave, the second wave was also characterised by friendly deals; however, the source of financing moved from cash to equity. The second wave also came to an end, due to the crashing of markets that happened in 1929, which resulted in the "Great Depression" that affected the USA and world economies in subsequent years.

### **2.3.3 Wave 3: 1955-1975**

The third wave of mergers came after the Second World War, between 1955 and 1975. This wave did not bring about much activity within the mergers and acquisitions space. This is because after the "Great Depression" caused by the second wave, markets slowed down, thus limiting opportunities for mergers, either between small companies or large corporates.

This third wave started in the 1950s, while further restrictions were imposed to prevent anti-competitive behaviour in mergers and acquisitions. As a result of these restrictions, new businesses were developed. This wave gave rise to the concept of

diversification as opposed to the first and second waves that were characterised by horizontal and vertical integration (Belyn 2016). According to Knecht (2013:48), diversification refers to the strategy of venturing into "new products and markets" with the view of creating growth for the business.

While the third wave began with stricter business policies, it contributed to the increase in diversification from 9% to 21%. Diversification in mergers and acquisitions refers to the means of growing the business outside the organisation's industry category with the aim of gaining advantage in the market share (Gaughan 2007). According to Chandler (1998), this increase made diversification a key role-player during this third wave. An example of the third wave of mergers was General Electric, which started showing interest in unrelated businesses, such as transportation and healthcare. This wave began to slow in the 1970s and eventually collapsed in 1981. This was followed by the fourth wave of mergers and acquisitions, which is discussed next.

#### **2.3.4 Wave 4: 1984-1989**

The fourth wave of mergers started toward the mid-80s and was a different wave compared to the previous ones. What made this wave different from others was that proposals for mergers were often met with a great level of hostility from organisations' top management. Ravenscraft (1987) asserts that the fourth wave took place during the period of depressed stock markets where "conglomerates of the previous wave divested their divisions". During this wave, there was a simultaneous expansion and downsizing of corporate businesses, where expanding organisations looked to improve their position in the competitive market. The fourth wave saw an increase in terms of efficiencies that started developing after the third wave (Morck, Schleifer & Vishny 1990).

The world's big economies, such as the USA and the UK, started seeing massive increases in mergers during this wave (Shleifer & Vishny 2003). After 1989, merger and acquisition activities slowed down and eventually led to the end of the fourth wave due to market crashes. The USA experienced a huge wave of mergers within the public sector between the 80s and 90s (Andrade, Mitchell & Stafford 2001). This wave of mergers was as a result of challenging economic markets (Shleifer & Vishny 2003). Hartford (2005) observed that challenges in the economic environment created a need

for industry restructuring, a business decision that mergers are part of. This shows that even in the so-called powerful economies like the USA, organisations may resort to mergers to survive.

### **2.3.5 Wave 5: 1993-2000**

The 1990s is known as an era of great economic prospects. During this time, markets were growing at a rapid pace, as the process of globalisation was gradually developing (Martynova & Renneboog 2008). European and USA markets saw an increased rate in merger and acquisition deals. Because of globalisation, organisations started searching beyond their domestic borders to find organisations they can merge with (Vaara 2002). Merger activities were driven by the quest for growth and many organisations wanted to be part of the global economy.

Among major mergers experienced during this period were Exxon and Mobil, Citibank and Travellers, as well as Chrysler and Daimler Benz. These deals signalled the fifth merger, which was characterised by technological innovations such as IT and ICT. This wave was friendly in nature and like other waves that ended due to financial difficulties, the fifth wave also ended. A summary of the different waves is presented in Table 2.1 below.

**Table 2.1: The five waves of mergers and acquisitions**

	<b>Wave 1</b>	<b>Wave 2</b>	<b>Wave 3</b>	<b>Wave 4</b>	<b>Wave 5</b>
Period	1893-1904	1910-1929	1955-1975	1984-1989	1993-2000
Means of payment	Cash	Equity	Equity	Cash/Debt	Equity
Outcome	Creation of monopolies	Ceasing of monopolies	Diversification	Takeover	Globalisation
Nature	Friendly	Friendly	Friendly	Hostile	Friendly

**Source: Own compilation**

## **2.4 Mergers in South Africa**

It should be noted that any merger decision is aimed at appeasing the shareholders of the organisations involved.

When mergers fail, most hard-hit are shareholders who invested huge amounts of money with the hope of getting a return on the investment. Wimberley and Negash (2004:36) conducted a study on mergers among organisations listed at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). Findings show that 10% of mergers failed to create positive returns for stakeholders. Halfar (2011) used a sample of 29 firms listed on the JSE and found that mergers destroy shareholder value within the first two years of existence, and then create value in their third year.

In the South African Telecommunication space, some mergers managed to create expected value for shareholders. For example, when the mobile company MTN acquired Verizon Business in June 2008, there were gains realised by shareholders who saw increases between 2009 and 2013, reaching dividends per share from 192 cents to 879 cents. In South Africa, where the telecommunication market is highly competitive, these are great returns (Andersen, Denrell & Bettis 2007). On the other hand, Telkom Group acquired 75% of the Namibian firm MWeb, a satellite-based Internet Service Provider (Mail & Guardian 2008). This deal resulted in positive financial indicators until 2011.

Shortly thereafter, shareholder value was destroyed due to persistent competition within the industry. This prompted Telkom to withdraw some of the strategic initiatives to pursue cross-border markets. It is for this reason that to date, its competitors MTN and Vodacom have bigger market share in African markets. As stated in section 2.3, South Africa has seen the emergence of new businesses in the form of mergers after 1994. Since May 2011, all takeovers and public mergers and acquisitions were regulated according to the Companies Act No 71 of 2008, also known as the Companies Act of South Africa (South Africa 2008:s 223).

## 2.5 The role of the competition tribunal in South Africa

The South African Competition Commission Tribunal is an administrative entity established in terms of the Competition Act, No 89, of 1998 (South Africa 1998:sec 29). The entity has jurisdiction throughout the Republic of South Africa for regulating two broad areas of competition, namely mergers and acquisitions and prohibited practices or/and anti-competitive conduct (South Africa 1998:sec 29.1).

The Competition Commission Tribunal is mandated to (a), grant exemptions, authorise or prohibit large mergers (with or without conditions), or prohibit a merger, (b), adjudicate in relation to any conduct prohibited and (c), grant an order for costs on matters presented to it by the Competition Tribunal (South Africa 1998:sec 29). It exercises its functions in accordance with the Act, the Constitution and without fear, favour or prejudice. Table 2.2 below shows some of the 10 most notable mergers experienced in different sectors within South Africa after 1994.

**Table 2.2: South African mergers between 2000 and 2018**

Merging Companies					
No.	Company A	Company B	Year	New Name	Industry
1.	Hewlett	Packard	2000	Hewlett-Packard	Information Technology (IT)
2.	Alcatel	Lucent	2006	Alcatel-Lucent	Telecommunications
3.	Murray and Roberts	Wade Walker	2007	N/A	Construction
4.	Gold Reef Resorts	Tsogo Sun	2010	N/A	Hotel/Hospitality
5.	Nashua	Siemens	2010	Nashua-Siemens	Communications
6.	Anglo Gold Ashanti	First Uranium	2012	N/A	Mining
7.	Imperial Holdings	Probe Group	2012	N/A	Fleet/Motor

8.	Telkom Enterprise	Business Connexion	2015	BCX	Information Communication and Technology (ICT)
9.	Macsteel 1603	Tessara	2018	N/A	Manufacturing
10.	Sanlam Life Insurance	Ingenuity Property Investment	2018	N/A	Investments

**Source: Own compilation**

Telkom acquired Business Connexion. Later, there was a merger between Telkom Enterprise Division and Business Connexion, where a new organisation called BCX was formed. At the time of the merger, Telkom Enterprise Division had 4000 employees and Business Connexion had 6000 employees. The merged organisation had a total of 10000 employees. At the time of the study, the number of employees had dropped to 5200 due to prior restructuring that happened.

## **2.6 The rationale behind mergers**

From a strategic management perspective, decisions to enter into mergers should not be haphazardly taken (Toxvaerd 2004:11). These decisions must be rational for the success of the merger process. Some authors (Nevo 2000; Dube 2005; Thomadsen 2005) agree that the reasons for mergers include, but is not limited to (1), strategic purpose, (2), financial sustainability, (3), cost reduction and (4) revamping of facilities of production. These are discussed at length below.

### **2.6.1 Strategic purpose**

As discussed in section 2.3, organisations embark on mergers to achieve their main strategic objectives (Stahl & Mendelhall 2005). A merger can be a make or break for any organisation if not planned well, communicated effectively and proper due diligence is not applied (Angwin 2001). Owing to the demands and challenges of the competitive market environment, the aim of any merger should be more than just a combination of two or more organisations, but rather the achievement of strategic ambitions that the organisation sets for itself.



### **2.6.2 Financial stability**

If a merger is entered into with a correct mind-set, it can be a key driver to the organisation's financial sustainability (Nevo 2000).

When revenues shrink, profits dwindle and markets are generally not responding, mergers are go-to strategies for the long-term survival of organisations (Bruner 2011).

Admittedly, some industries are more financially vulnerable than others; however, De Prato, Nepelski and Simon (2013) evidenced that the ICT industry is one of the most vulnerable industries in South Africa. It is for this reason that organisations are either planning or are in discussions with others on entering into merger agreements. The most recent of these were Vodacom's plan to enter into an agreement with Cell C (SAPA 2001), Telkom's plan to enter into agreement with MTN (NetAdmin 2014), Datacentrix acquiring Pinnacle (Gilbert 2015) and Liquid Telecom acquiring Neotel (Tata Communication 2018). All these activities are deemed necessary for organisations that are conscious of their financial well-being and sustainability.

### **2.6.3 Cost reductions**

Organisations that merge successfully seem to operate in a more cost-effective manner than separate ones (Roller, Stennek & Verboven 2006). An organisation may greatly benefit from operational efficiencies as a result of the merger. According to DeLong (2001), when organisations merge, they reduce overheads and improve efficiencies by sharing resources such as operational structure, organisational facilities, staff headcounts, systems and offices. It is expected of merging organisations to reduce cost as swiftly as possible so that revenues and profits could be realised. Cost reduction remains one of the main drivers of mergers. For example, the merger between Alcatel and Lucent in 2006 was expected to "raise at least 2 billion euros or \$2.7 billion, by the end of 2015" (O'Brien 2013). This was to be achieved through planned job reductions and asset sales.

#### **2.6.4 Revamping facilities of production**

To achieve economies of scale, organisations undertake mergers by amalgamating production facilities and utilising plant resources (Park & Jang 2011). Economies of scale is a term that refers to gaining costs through increased production levels (Moeller & Brady 2011).

This means that by merging two or more organisations, the intended strategy is to standardise product specifications, expand markets, improve product quality, strengthen after sales services and to bring about good customer experience.

#### **2.7 Benefits of mergers**

Benefits of mergers differ from organisation to organisation. They include rapid access to available technologies, opportunities to expand products and services, an extended customer base, a stronger financial position and an enhanced market position (Saboo & Gopi 2009). Merged organisations may have a greater share of the market, giving them a considerable competitive advantage. For example, in South Africa the Telecommunications, Media, and Technology sector benefited from mergers by influencing market structures. This was due to this sector being too fragmented, resulting in increases in the number of small medium ICT companies, compelling bigger companies to consolidate through mergers (Petitt & Ferris 2013).

The mergers between Telkom Enterprise and Business Connexion brought about new product ranges for customers, as they were now exposed to both Telecommunications and Information Technology products and services. This made competition even more interesting as customers could choose to go for an one-stop service by entering into a business agreement with one service provider (Faulkner & Campbell, 2003). Under the new name BCX, customers can now purchase a wide range of products, from Virtual Private Networks (VPN), IS (Internet Services), Data Centre Services, IoT (Internet of Things), Cloud-based Services such as IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service), PaaS (Platform as a Service), and SaaS (Software as a Service). Keller and Lehmann (2003:28) caution that though mergers are expected to benefit merging organisations, they are very costly projects and the benefits are not immediately observable.

This is a disadvantage of mergers. Some of the notable challenges of mergers are discussed next.

## **2.8 Challenges of mergers**

While mergers are expected to produce benefits for merging organisations, the challenges they pose cannot be underestimated (Stahl & Mendenhall 2005). Eccles, Lanes and Wilson (1999:137) argue that some of the challenges that merging organisations face include poor business synergies between merging organisations, post-managerial power struggles and personnel tensions, lack of clear direction as to where the merged organisation is heading, communication dynamics and disintegrated organisational value chains.

In a study conducted in 2002 by Deloitte & Touche, 540 firms were surveyed regarding the success of mergers, findings indicate that only one out of three mergers were successful. Furthermore, Mitleton-Kelly (2006) agrees that overall, the reason for the high rate of merger failure is lack of communication. According to Valant (2008:15), a lack of clear and open communication often causes organisational mergers to fail. The failure to communicate drops the morale of everyone involved in the merger process, where grapevine or organisational "gossip" may take over. As Wall (2005:43) opines, if a communication gap exists between management and employees regarding the merger, the vacuum will be filled with rumours. Maintaining continuous and constructive communication with all stakeholders is important during the merger (Mumm & Beuerlein 2004).

Tenenbaum (1999) asserts that one of the main downsides of mergers is that the effort to integrate two or more organisations might have a negative impact on the customers, as the work of aligning and integrating merged organisations takes attention away from the customer, the competition and the productivity of the organisation. It is important to note that mergers are not always a recipe for organisational success. Muller (2006) suggests that while the organisation may see the need to be part of a merger, this process may result in high levels of anxiety, uncertainty, low employee morale levels, low employee performance, high staff turnover and absenteeism.

Authors assert that post-merger resources are deployed in a way that translates into favourable conditions for the merging organisations (Karim & Mitchell 2000:21). Since mergers are organisational decisions taken at a strategic level of the organisation, their success is imperative for the survival of the organisation.

It should be noted that when organisations merge, several communications-related disciplines get affected, either positively or negatively. The importance of communication in facilitating mergers is discussed next.

## **2.9 The importance of communication in facilitating mergers**

Although organisations present mergers to shareholders as a strategy to create wealth, they often fail to recognise the importance of communicating this strategy to their employees (Phoenix 2006).

The overall success of a merger may be impacted by employees' feelings, what employees know and integration techniques before and after the merger (Gaplin & Herndon 2000). When mergers are effectively communicated, after-merger integration turns out to be a smoother process, as it is during this period that mergers either make or break the organisations involved.

According to Ludlow & Panton (1992), merging organisations should consider employee communication as an important aspect throughout all stages of the merger process. Angwin, Mellahi, Gomes & Peter (2014) emphasise the importance of communication during mergers as it helps explain how employees in the organisation respond and ultimately bind the organisation together. Communication is at the forefront of other aspects such as the integration of new technologies, staff empathy and organisational culture (Mickleson & Worley 2003). Burner (2004) agrees with the authors above regarding the importance of communication in mergers, by stating that while aspects such as executive leadership, an effective implementation processes, integration planning, staff structuring and change management are critically important, communication with stakeholders remains the cornerstone of all mergers and acquisitions.

## **2.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter reflected on mergers and acquisitions focusing specifically on global trends, their history and how they have evolved over the years. Furthermore, the chapter looked at their role and purpose in the context of South Africa to better understand the merger between BXC and Telkom Business/Enterprise. The chapter concludes by looking at the importance of communication during mergers which will be expanded on further in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE ON CHANGE COMMUNICATION**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous two chapters provided the introduction and background to the research problem to help contextualise the study. In this chapter, the focus is on the theoretical framework that underpins the study and related concepts. The chapter looks at the literature written on the role of communication during organisational change and reviews conclusions and perspectives of scholars who have written extensively on the subject. Notably, various scholars have studied the subject over the years and agree that employee communications play a critical role when organisations go through structural changes (Oakland & Oakland 2001; Fuchs, Henn, Franz & Mudambi 2017). The literature is reviewed in line with the three research objectives of this study: (a) to explore the use of a communication strategy during a merger, (b) to describe the internal stakeholder's level of satisfaction regarding communication channels used during the merger, and (c) to explore the stakeholders' perspective of communication during the merger.

Although previous studies have investigated the role communications play in the change management process, they tend to put emphasis on the impact of employee communications on the success or failure of any organisational change process (Bull & Brown 2012; Brown & Cregan 2008; Hughes 2007; Conrad & Poole 2005), and not so much on employee experiences with communications before, during and after a merger, which is what this study seeks to achieve. The importance of employee communication during organisational change cannot be underestimated (Lewis 2006). The literature review begins by looking at the construct of organisational communication in general, its relevance to the ICT sector in South Africa and its role in organisations.

This is followed by an examination of the concept of organisational change and the importance of employee communications during the period of change. The theoretical and conceptual framework that guides this study is discussed below.

### 3.2 Theoretical framework

Given (2008:871) defines a theoretical framework in research as "any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena". A theoretical framework provides a guide to the researcher to not deviate from the theories that contribute to the scholarly and academic work of their research (Fulton & Krainovich-Miller 2010). Agreeably, Brondizio, Leemans and Solecki (2014) state that a theoretical framework is a specific theory about aspects that is useful to the study. It mostly consists of "theoretical constructs, principles, concepts and tenant' theories" (Grant & Osanloo 2014:13). The study uses Nudge's Theory as it underpins the knowledge base of the phenomenon to be investigated, employee communication.

Figure 3.1 below depicts the 7-step Nudge's change theory and its relevance to the study. Nudge's change theory is discussed in detail in section 3.7.1.5.

Nudge Change Theory		The theory's positioning in the study
<b>Step 1</b>	Clearly define the change	<i>Change communication</i>
<b>Step 2</b>	Consider change from employee's point of view	<i>Employee communication/experience</i>
<b>Step 3</b>	Use evidence to show the best options	<i>Change communication</i>
<b>Step 4</b>	Present the change as a choice	<i>Organisational communication and Change communication</i>
<b>Step 5</b>	Listen to feedback	<i>Communication Channels and organisational performance</i>
<b>Step 6</b>	Limit obstacles	<i>Employee communication &amp; Employee experience</i>
<b>Step 7</b>	Keep momentum up with short-term wins	<i>Communication strategy and Leadership role</i>

**Figure 3.1: Nudge's change Theory and its positioning to the study**

**Source: Own compilation**

### **3.3 Organisational communication**

Organisational communication is a very complex concept to define. Richmond and McCroskey (2009:30) define it as "the process by which individuals stimulate meaning in the minds of other individuals by means of verbal and nonverbal messages in the context of a formal organisation". This definition suggests that organisational communication is not a once-off activity, but rather a "process".

It further suggests that for communication to be deemed organisational, it must happen between individuals of a formal organisation. Lastly, the definition suggests that during this process, individuals stimulate each other's minds by means of spoken (verbal) or nonverbal (unspoken) messages. Pace and Faules (1994:20) agree and add that organisational communication is "the display and interpretation of messages among communication units who are part of a particular organisation". There are two distinct descriptions from these definitions namely "stimulate meaning" and "interpretation of messages". This means that individuals within the organisation communicate, not for the purpose of communicating, but for deriving meaning and understanding from such communication.

Cornelissen (2014:5) attests to the complexity of providing a universal definition of organisational communication by stating that the term refers to that function of management "offering a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication" with the intention of "establishing and maintaining a good reputation" with different stakeholder groups that the organisation depends on to survive. This explanation proposes that management has the responsibility to ensure that organisational communication provides information needed by stakeholders, both internally and externally. In short, organisational communication is a broad term used to define communication that occurs within and outside an organisation (Cornelissen 2014:5).



### **3.4 Communication strategy**

Communication strategy is a purposeful communication plan designed by a person or organisation with the aim of persuading audiences to gain knowledge, change attitudes or induce desired behaviour (Connolly-Ahern 2008).

Steyn & Puth (2000) describe communication strategy as a plan that establishes a framework or profile against which organisational communication decisions are tested, by reviewing and questioning the direction taken by the organisational communication function as well as producing a profile that can be utilised to identify organisational communication problems.

The study acknowledges the latter explanation as it talks to various stages of the organisation, including the process of organisational change such as a merger. According to Roberts, Campbell and Lloy (2013), communication strategy consists of four key elements: (a), audience, (b), communication channels, (c), messaging and (d) stakeholder engagement. These elements play a significant role in helping the organisation to plan and organise its messages so that they can avoid barriers of communication, increase the understanding of conveyed messages and get a good response from intended audiences. These four elements are explained below:

#### **3.4.1 Audience**

Any form of communication is intended for an audience (Rice & Atkin 2013). This element of the communication strategy looks at the needs, preferences, requirements, skills, education and expectations of the audience. Before it can start to communicate, the organisation should know who its listeners are, what they know about it and what expectations they have. If an organisation has to communicate to audiences or employees who are demotivated, it must determine what will motivate the audience. The communication strategy should be built in a manner that ensures consideration for audiences (Roberts et al 2013).

### **3.4.2 Communication channels**

According to Wrench, Thomas-Maddox, Richmond and McCroskey (2008), "communication channels are methods and techniques used to send messages". These channels include telephones, letters, reports, meetings, Internet, to name but a few. People or organisations may choose between communication channels for varying reasons, such as, ease of use, simple reference. Communication channels may contribute to the success of the overall message (Wrench et al 2008).

According to this definition, communication channels are viewed as critical for the delivery of messages. According to Servaes (2014), communication channels are very important for effective communication. This element of communication strategy addresses questions such as: what are the best communication channels to use? What cultural aspects of the audience need to be considered? What channels do the audiences prefer? Whatever channels the organisation decides to use, it must be able to solicit response or feedback from the intended audience.

This will assist the organisation to make decisions on whether the communication strategy must be adjusted or not.

### **3.4.3 Messaging**

At the centre of every communication lies the message (Whaley & Samter 2007). This element of communication strategy deals with the style of speech, the structure and tone of the message. The message is expected to be free from ambiguity and mistakes. For the organisation to achieve this, it must answer these questions: should the message be formal or informal? Will the audience agree to messages being conveyed? Will there be enough time to clarify messages to the audience if needs be? The communication strategy should be built considering these questions.

### **3.4.4 Stakeholder engagement**

O'Riordan (2017:79) defines stakeholder engagement as "the process used by an organisation to engage relevant stakeholders for the purpose of achieving accepted outcomes". According to Kidd and McGowan (2013), stakeholder engagement refers to the full participation of the organisation's interested parties in planning or decision-

making efforts, in order to integrate their knowledge and values with a particular project or purpose. Many scholars argue that integrating stakeholder knowledge and values in decision-making scenarios, leads to improved organisational governance and accountability (Koontz & Thomas, 2006; Wagenet & Pfeffer, 2007, Husted & Allen 2010). On the contrary, Noland and Phillips (2010) attests that in itself, the concept of stakeholder engagement is conceptually slippery and context dependent, meaning that its effectiveness cannot always be trusted.

Additionally, the process of stakeholder engagement is rarely conflict free, as various stakeholders often have different competing values that may result in conflicts and tensions (Hall & Vredenburg, 2003). According to Kazadi, Lievens and Mahr (2016), when the organisation is unable to manage and solve conflicts between stakeholders, this slows down or impede decision-making. Though evident that not all authors agree to the importance of stakeholder engagement, the researcher deemed this critical for organisations that go through a change. This is so because organisational change impacts all stakeholders involved, especially employees (Dicke, 2007).

### **3.5 Employee communication**

According to scholars, concepts of internal communications and employee communications are used interchangeably to refer to communications that occurs within an organisation (Dolphin 2005; Welch & Jackson 2007; Ruck 2015). According to Fitz-Patrick and Valskov (2014:46), employee communication refers to a process where information is shared among employees in a way that builds understanding to achieve organisational goals. Different scholars define the concept of employee communications differently informed largely by changes taking place in organisations (Hayase 2009). Some scholars prefer to define it in terms of its perceived functions and context (Forssberg & Malm 2001). Welch and Jackson (2007) explain it as transactions between individuals or groups within organisations or a process through which employees are given information about their individual roles in an organisation (Verčič, Verčič & Sriramesh 2012:227).

Hayase (2009:2) takes an operational view when defining internal communication as “the exchange of information both formal and informal between employees and management in organisations”. This is applicable as it addresses communication between different stakeholders in the organisation. In line with how authors above view and define internal or employee communication, the study provides a brief overview of how communication is viewed within the organisation. Communication within the organisation should not be viewed as stand-alone discipline, but rather a discipline that resides within the marketing function, which in turn reports to the Human Resources (HR) department.

This centralisation is not new to modern-day organisations as it was viewed, during the Weberian era as the best method of guaranteeing consistency and accuracy of information communicated to its stakeholders, both internally and externally (Hahn, Lippert & Payton 2018). This form of gatekeeping in the different departments ensures credibility and trust in communications to employees. According to Marvin (1998), the importance of employee communication in the telecommunication industry has been the subject of immense debate among scholars since the beginning of the 1990s.

Researchers agree that due to the emergence of new media technologies, employee communication has become more important to respond to the changing needs of employees (Deresky 2000; Brown & Cregan 2008). The arrival of new technologies has put even more pressure on the ICT industry to look at its own systems. Attempts to define the concept of employee communication is further complicated by different interpretations of its role in organisations. For the purpose of this study, however, employee communication will refer to the communication of the organisation's information between its management and employees.

### ***3.5.1 The role of employee communications***

Welch and Jackson (2007) view employee communications as facilitating engagement between an organisation and its internal stakeholders. Its main function is to strengthen the relationship between an organisation and its internal stakeholders according to Karanges (2014:31). Verčič et al (2012) focus more on its role as an educator, consultant, communicator and more importantly, as a change agent.

This means that employee communication is expected to educate, communicate change and play a consultative role when critical organisational messages are to be shared with employees. Hirschfield (1999) asserts that employee communication should be direct and phrased for easy understanding, without being patronising. For this to be achieved, management should take extra steps to ensure that employee communication is clear and concise. Researchers agree that when employee communication is forthright and understood, it enhances employee awareness and motivates them to embrace change (Johnson 2009; Sundstro & Annika 2009; Ruck & Welch 2012). It is for this reason that employee communication must be prioritised during the merger process.

### ***3.5.2 Categories of employee communications***

Forssberg & Malm (2001) categorise communication that occurs within organisations into formal and informal. Formal communication is management-initiated, whereas informal communication refers to communication that occurs between employees themselves (Forssberg & Malm 2001). Formal communication flows upward or downward in the form of policies, procedures or work instructions (Steinberg 1999), whereas informal communication can take any form (Pham 2014).

On the other hand, informal communication is viewed as between employees during informal settings such as lunch time talks, corridor discussions and grapevine. Papa, Daniels and Spiker (2007:63) opine that grapevine communication "is usually oral and generally occurs in cluster transmission patterns. It may begin, flow and end anywhere in an organisation". Although grapevine communication is usually incomplete, information shared within it tends to be more accurate than inaccurate and often travels very fast (Papa et al 2007).

Erden (2013:97) states that during the process where informal communication is developed, employees engage in the interchange of gossip and rumours. Gossip occurs when a third person is discussed, criticised and disapproved in their absence, while rumours intend to interpret situations that are threatening and undefined (Clegg & Van Iterson 2009). Houmanfar and Johnson (2004) add that gossip and rumours seem to have had an insignificant long-term effect on the organisation in which they have taken place, the grapevine seems to have made a long-lasting impression.

Academics agree that the significance of the informal communication such as the grapevine should not be underestimated as it builds relationships and bonds among employees (Neil 2014; Berger 2005).

### ***3.5.3 Advantages of formal communications***

According to Pathak (2008), some of the advantages of formal communication are that it (a), allows the flow of information in an orderly and authentic manner since it happens in line with prescribed official rules, (b), covers all the sub-systems of an organisation and is useful in reaching all divisions within the organisation, (c), filters information to ensure that only relevant parties receive information as intended and (d), satisfies people in managerial positions and assists in controlling subordinates.

### ***3.5.4 Disadvantages of formal communication***

The disadvantages of formal communication include that it (a), inhibits free flow of information as messages can pass only through prescribed organisational channels, (b), is slow and rigid, resulting in delayed messages, (c), is expensive as it is in written form, requiring printing equipment and at times sophisticated networks and (d) distorts information, since information passes through several levels of authority Pathak (2008) opines that one of the prime disadvantages of formal communication is that it provides information overload to employees, which may become a burden for them. If communication to employees is too much to process or remember, it may result in employees being unhappy with management.

### ***3.5.5 Advantages of informal communications***

Though it does not follow formal communication procedures, informal communication has its own advantages (Pathi 2010). According to (Falkheimer & Heide 2019; Chaturvedi 2011), some of the advantages of informal communication include that it (a), carries organisational communication rapidly, (b), allows managers to know employee reactions to organisational policies and strategies, (c), creates a sense of unity among employees, particularly those who share and discuss views with each other, (d), serves as an emotional supportive value and (e) supplements information that formal communication does not provide.

### **3.5.6 Disadvantages of informal communication**

One of the notable disadvantages of informal communication is that much of the information that gets spread through informal channels is not verified (Tehaeureka 2012). Often, this information is likely false and difficult to confirm. Kumar (2012) adds that informal communication may carry some degree of error as it is baseless and non-factual. Information communicated in this manner may prove harmful to the organisation. This is because employees may be sharing self-serving information that may be distorted or untrue. According to Sapre (2011), informal communication often carries incomplete information, which may lead to misunderstandings.

Kumar (2012) lists some of the disadvantages of informal communication as (a), information distortion, (b), lack of secrecy, (c), misunderstanding, (d), huge rumours, and (e) communication mistakes.

### **3.5.7 Communication flows**

In organisations, communication flows in different directions, depending on who is communicating with whom and for what purpose. Schermerhorn, Osborn, Uhl-Bien and Hunt (2011) identify four main directions or flows as downward, upward, lateral, and diagonal.

*Downward communications:* According to Kalla (2005), downward communication refers to communication that flows directly from management down different levels into the organisation. Adey & Andrew (2010) opine that formal communication is used to (a), provide employees with information about policies, procedures, vision and mission of the organisation, (b), issue instructions, (c), provide information on how employees are performing and (d) share the general direction the organisation is taking. Furthermore, Pham (2014) suggests that downward communication is used to inform employees about changes occurring in the organisation. When management fails to communicate effectively with employees, they may feel less valuable (Keye & Jordan-Evans 2008; Reb Goldman, Ray, & Cropanzano 2006:5). The latest research and leading debates on downward communication reveal that attempts to make it effective often fail due to the inability of management to communicate (Thornton, Mansi, Thornton & Cappellano 2019; Bagad 2009; Bagad 2008).

Moreover, these studies found that downward communication has a direct influence on employee performance. For instance, employee effort was found to be 180% higher after effective communication than if there was no communication at all. In addition, the study found that only 50% of managers communicate effectively with employees. The other 50% are either restricting in their use of communication (meaning that 40% communicating either good or bad news), while the other 10% completely abstain from communicating. Non-communication was found to contribute about 30% of the profit losses for organisations. These figures are a testimony to the fact that employees value communication by management, which has a bearing to their performance.

*Upward communication:* This is communication initiated by employees to share information with those higher up in the organisation (Pham 2014).

Adey and Andrew (2010) assert that upward communication enables employees to give managers feedback on what is happening at their level. Mmope (2010) identifies upward communications as communication that happens from lower levels (subordinates) to the top level (management) of the organisation. Newman and Ober (2012) assert that upward communication provides management with suggestions and feedback regarding communication and opinions on how business can be improved, as well as information the organisation may need to make decisions.

One of the most important functions of a manager is to encourage "employees to voice their opinion and concerns" about the organisation (Newman & Ober 2012:9). Smith (2005) suggests that the effectiveness of upward communication in organisations largely depends on whether management is interested in receiving feedback or not. It also depends on the level of trust employees have in their supervisors (Pham 2014). Larger organisations struggle to manage upward communication due to the formal nature of their communications and relationships that are complex (Schermerhort et al 2014).

*Lateral communication:* refers to communication between employees who are on the same level in the organisation (Mmope 2010). Also referred to as horizontal communication, it usually involves work related communication, which enables employees to collaborate on tasks or important projects (Pham 2014). This could



include people working in the same group, work groups working on specific projects or managers on the same level collaborating on a project (Steinberg 1999).

*Diagonal communication* : Adey and Andrew (2010) identify diagonal communication as communication that flows between people who are not on the same level. This could involve people from different levels in the organisation collaborating on a project (Mmope 2010). Sometimes higher-level employees must work with lower level employees on a project, with each bringing a different skill or competency to the team (Adey & Andrew 2010).

### **3.5.8 Communication channels**

Organisations deploy different channels to communicate with employees. The type of channels organisations use depends largely on their unique circumstances such as employees' needs and messages to be communicated (Pham 2014). As part of the organisation's communication strategy, communication channels should be carefully selected to ensure effectiveness of messages communicated across the organisation (Uyar 2019:88). It is evident that communication channels go hand in hand with messages to be communicated across those channels. The importance of communication channels as drivers of effective communication has been academically researched (Hargie & Tourish 2004). What appears to be an agreement among researchers is that internal communication should make room for effective communication channels for the organisation to succeed (Holtz 2004; Quirke 2000). According to Kalla (2006), communication affects the motivation and dedication of employees, meaning that if they are involved with organisational communication, they are likely to operate efficiently.

On the other hand, communication is viewed by other organisations not only as a function, but as a discipline that enhances the relationship between the organisation and its employees (Argenti 2007; Gennard & Judge 2005). Research that was conducted as a case study in a baking sector organisation in Europe focused on communication channels used within the organisation and channels preferred by employees in that organisation (Bertacco & Deponte 2005). Findings from this research showed that respondents viewed the following channels as commonly used within the organisation; (a), face-to-face communication, (b), phone, (c), electronic

mail (e-mail) and (d) written documents. When answering statements about their preferred channels of communication, 45% preferred face-to-face communication, another 45% preferred e-mail communication and 8% preferred phone communication, while 2% preferred written communication. The next section discusses these channels in more detail both from the theoretical and practical perspective.

*Written communication:* Ramchandran (2017:7) defines written communication as "the form of communication that constitutes the bulk of recorded communication in a business organisation".

This form is a tangible record of information, instructions and messages. Sehgal (2006) observed that written organisational communication "has come to acquire great significance in the lives of individuals as well as business organisations". This is evident in the way this form of communication reaches vast geographical areas to reach targeted readers across the world.

Modern-day businesses rely on written records (minutes, reports and memoranda) rather than verbal communication. While written communication is not as fast and instant as verbal, organisationally it is widely seen as one of the best forms of communication (Canwell & Sutherland 2005). One of the most distinct advantages of written communication is that its originality can be kept or stored for a long time (Koontz 2001). On the other hand, one of its main disadvantages is that when it is lengthy, its intended recipients may be disinterested in reading it (Oakland 2000; Hybels & Weaver 2001; Miller 2015). A shorter and more precise form of written communication is often encouraged.

*Staff meetings:* are a form of communication used by management to engage with employees about matters pertaining to the organisation and employee performance (Argenti 2009). In organisations where a clear management hierarchy exists, management arrange frequent meetings with employees daily as "check-ins" on employee activities (Argenti 2009:191). These meeting are held on a regular basis as a channel to communicate organisational messages to employees across different departments. Important organisational information is shared in these meetings. This form of communication plays a pivotal role in strengthening the relationship between

the organisation and its employees (Kalla 2006). Employees deem this form of communication as useful as it is formal and provides them with an opportunity to express their concerns with management (Stuart, Sarow & Stuart 2007:200). It is therefore important that staff meetings be held regularly and at a time when employees can attend.

*Electronic communications:* Koneru (2008:73) defines electronic mail, abbreviated as email or e-mail as "a method of composing, sending and receiving messages over electronic communication systems". Organisationally, electronic mail is regarded as an instant and very inexpensive means of communication.

Antos and Ventola (2008:339) add that e-mail is "the most common of all methods for developing and maintaining technically-mediated interpersonal contact" among employees within the organisation. A study conducted in the pharmaceutical industry found that information received by electronic mail (e-mail) among doctors is increasing, meaning that communication of medical information by e-mail received the highest evaluation among one-way communication channels (Reast, Lindgreen, Paliawadana, Spickett-Jones & Barnes 2011).

*Management meetings:* According to Hewitt (2006), management meetings are a form of communication that must create a positive climate in the two-way communication between top management and employees. This communication must be built on mutual trust and transparency (Lester & Brower 2003). Edwards and Cable (2009) state that during the process of organisational change, developing mutual trust between management and employees become a critical component of communications in an organisation (Salamon & Robinson 2008). This means that management should create a communication platform with employees.

*EXCO Roadshows:* According to Waddell, Creed, Cummings and Worley (2019), roadshows are a form of interactive communication where the executive team hold large gatherings with employees in order to offer them first-hand information about events happening within the organisation. During merger processes, roadshows are considered the most effective way of communicating with employees. These are live and interactive meetings that are held at different places/regions, which are accessible to all employees (Waddell et al 2019). While information shared at these roadshows

is not entirely different from what is communicated on other channels, the main difference with this channel is that it affords employees the opportunity to interact face-to-face with top management (EXCO). Top management use roadshows to provide details of the organisation's strategy. It is also at these roadshows that current news that affects the organisation is shared. The section below discusses organisational change and some of its related models.

### **3.6 Organisational change**

Organisational change happens when an organisation evolves from its current state to the desired state (Smith 2005). This evolution may take different forms, such as mergers and acquisitions, conglomerations and amalgamations. Kamudin (2006) asserts that organisations go through change to reshape themselves to meet the demands of their customers. During the organisational change process, organisations find themselves having to change their structures, policies and objectives. However, while this change may be necessary for the organisation, employees' response to it may be something of a challenge for the organisation. Organisational change may result in uncertainty, anxiety and behavioural problems among employees (Shah & Shah 2010). If managed poorly, organisational change may result in employees resisting the change.

The study that was conducted by Eby (2000), with the objective of exploring factors influencing employee resistance to organisational change, found that there is a direct link between organisational change and employees' attitudes toward change. The study found that there are four factors that influence employees' resistance to organisational change: (1), opportunity or need for personal growth (36%), (2), past experiences of the change process (49%), (3), lack of communication during the change process (8%) and (4) co-workers' perception to the change process (7%). The study recommended that managers must cultivate trust through effective communication with employees. It also recommended that the line of communication must always be open to the employees, allowing them to play an active role in the changes happening within the organisation, propose initiatives and suggest solutions to solve problems facing the organisation.

### 3.6.1 Models for organisational change

Available literature shows that there are numerous models or theories that organisations apply during the process of change, such as mergers and acquisitions (McKenna 2000; Hiatt 2006; Cummings & Worley 2009). These models are (a), Kurt Lewin's change model (1947), (b), Bridge's transitional model (1991), (c), Kotter's change model (1996), (d), the ADKAR model (1998), and (e) Nudge's change theory (2008). The next section discusses some of the models available in literature.

#### 3.6.1.1 Kurt Lewin's change model

Kurt Lewin's change model (1947) of organisational change was developed as a guide to organisations going through change (Sarayreh, Khudair & Barakat 2013:627). There are three stages in this model, unfreezing, change and re-freezing. Figure 3.2 shows a conceptualised Kurt Lewin change model.



Figure 3.2: Kurt Lewin's Change Model

Source: Adapted from Sarayreh, Khudair and Barakat (2013)

The three stages are discussed in more detail below

### **Stage 1: Unfreezing**

At this stage of the model, successful organisational change must be planned and this requires the system to unfreeze. Unfreezing is when the organisation diverts from its current way of doing things (status quo) to a new direction as triggered by its overall strategy. During this stage, the organisation may experience increased pressure from employees and some of its stakeholders. This pressure in turn, may result in employee resistance and tension that may make change difficult to implement. The organisation requires the employees' buy-in at this stage.

In the context of this study, the unfreezing stage is when the two competing organisations engage in the process of entering a merger, to form one organisation (Deresky 2000).

### **Stage 2: Change**

The second stage of Lewin's model deals with the change process. This stage requires both leadership and employees to be involved in the process of the organisation to implement the desired change. Leadership at this stage plays the role of "influencing individuals to achieve common goals" (Cummings & Worley 2003), while employees' involvement means that they "overcome the resistance to organisational change" and support the organisation's quest to achieve desired outcomes (Pierce, Gardner & Dunham 2002:630). In the context of this study, the change stage is when leadership (management) and employees go through a transitional process of accepting that things are about to change and status quo will no longer remain.

### **Stage 3: Refreezing**

This is the last stage of Lewin's change model. It involves the stage where the organisation is now functioning as desired by the change process. At this stage new structures are integrated according to the organisation's changed priorities and goals. In the context of this study, the refreezing stage is when the change is implemented and two previously competing organisations are now merged into one organisation.

### **3.6.1.2 Bridge's transitional model**

Bridge's transitional model (1991) suggests that change happens to individuals, which can cause resistant behaviours, whereas transition is a process which individuals experience as they go through change (source). This model comprises of three stages namely (a), ending, losing and letting go, (b), the neutral zone and (c) the new beginning. The three stages are discussed below.

**Ending, losing, and letting go:** It is a natural feeling that when individuals first experience change, the emotions of losing something they feel comfortable with develop. For them to continue with the change process, they must come to the realisation and acceptance that something old is ending (Huy 2002). According to Kiefer (2005), the intensity and volume of organisational change results in the increase of negative emotions.

Moran and Brightman (2001) suggest that these negative emotions can be managed in several ways, including helping individuals affected by change to cope with losses it caused.

**The neutral zone:** The neutral zone of Bridge's transitional model is that stage that bridges the old and the new. At this stage, there is more confusion, uncertainty and impatience. Individuals whom change affects may show behaviours such as low morale, lack of self-motivation, anxiousness and resistance towards the change (Cook 2008). According to Bridge (1991:44), this is where the actual transition takes place and falls between "what was" and "what will be". King (2005:179) describes this stage as "a kind of emotional wilderness, an ambiguous space that is neither the old reality nor yet fully the new". Bridge's stage two of the transitional model is the individual and organisation's best opportunity for renewal and development (Burke 2002).

**The new beginning:** Once the anxious stage ends, the new beginning stage commences. At this stage, acceptance and new energy is represented as every individual starts realising the importance of adopting the change. New behaviours emerge such as motivation, openness to new ideas and the buying-in of the change vision. Bridge's transitional model provides a foundation to support change leaders in

mapping the best support individuals need during the change process. This allows them to minimise potential negative effects of change (Kotter 1996).

### **3.6.1.3 Kotter's change model**

*Kotter's change model (1996):* Kotter, a Professor of Leadership at the Harvard Business School, developed an eight-step change model that was aimed at assisting strategic managers when the need for change arises within their organisations.

By successfully applying the eight steps, it is anticipated that strategic managers will be able to transform the organisation and lead it to the desired outcome envisaged after the change process. The section below looks at these eight distinctive steps.

#### **Step 1: Create a sense of urgency**

The first step of Kotter's change model is about management initiating an open and honest communication process within the organisation about the urgent need for change. This involves getting the buy-in for change, since change is not always accepted by those it affects. According to Kotter (1996), for change to be successful, there must be at least 75% of buy-in by the organisation's management. This step also suggests that change leaders must communicate challenges, risks, opportunities facing the organisation as well as their urgency. If these are not communicated, employees will stay in their comfort zones, not seeing the need for change (Borbye 2010).

#### **Step 2: Forming a guiding coalition**

Forming a guiding coalition during the change process includes garnering leadership and visible support from individuals with influence, who can mobilise more stakeholders to embrace change. During this stage, change leaders need to group people together to be leaders in guiding the team to embrace change (Thota & Munir 2011). It is important that the group trust each other and move in the same direction. Change leaders need to ensure that this group is formed by individuals with authority, knowledge and skills to communicate change.



### **Step 3: Create a vision**

When a clear vision about change is created, people understand the purpose of change and its desired outcomes. This makes change more accepted and assist in reducing uncertainties and anxieties that naturally emerge from a change process. A clear change vision also allows people to recognise that there are reasons to change how the organisation is doing business (Anderson & Anderson 2010). This recognition triggers the process where leaders decide to formally mobilise a change effort.

### **Step 4: Communicate the vision**

One of the most important features of organisational change is communication (Kitchen & Daly 2002). By communicating the vision during change, leaders take every opportunity to link the vision to the reason why change is needed. According to Kotter (1996), for change leaders to be successful in communicating their vision, they need to do this at least ten times the amount they expect to have to communicate. Cameron and Green (2004) agree that the vision and strategies need to be communicated clearly so that people within the organisation do not argue as to why change is needed.

### **Step 5: Removing change barriers**

Any change process is bound to be met with resistance. The resistance may be in a form of policies, procedures, processes and other organisational engagements. Kotter (1996) asserts that the resistance, which is a barrier to change, should be addressed on a case by case-by-case basis to enable change efforts to proceed. Change leaders remove change barriers by regularly conducting self-assessments to check for change resistance and addressing these immediately (Daft & Marcic 2011). When these are timeously addressed, it is expected that change will happen without any hindrances.

### **Step 6: Create quick wins**

When change success are observed, they need to be publicly recognised, collected, and communicated (Kotter 1996). At this point of organisational change, short-term successes need to be incorporated so that the sense of urgency will be justified (Karambelkar 2014). Change becomes viable and visible to those it affects. It is at this

point of the change process when change leaders realise that change is indeed happening.

### **Step 7: Build on the change**

According to Kotter (1996), when enough momentum is built and early wins are visible, change leaders need to be relentless with the remaining aspects of the change until the vision is a reality.

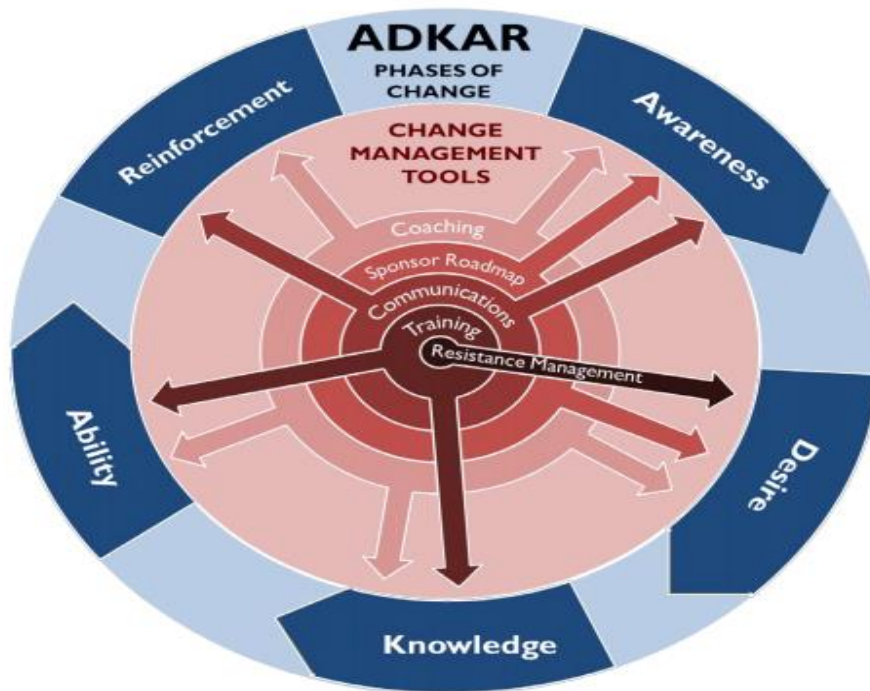
This means that management should consider early successes as enablers for future successes. Van Dam & Oreg (2008) asserts that building on the change entails hiring and promoting individuals who support and can execute the change implementation plans.

### **Step 8: Make the change stick**

This step of the model deals with the institutionalisation of the change. At this stage of change, the organisation's leadership is responsible for articulating connections between the new behaviours and organisational success, ensuring that these behaviours are kept strong enough to replace old ones. When the organisation's old behaviours are replaced by new ones, this enables the organisation to "create a new, supportive and sufficiently strong organisational culture" (Kotter & Cohen 2015:159). This includes that existing staff and new leaders are brought in to embrace change. For change to stick, the leadership needs to talk about success stories that change has brought to the organisation.

#### **3.6.1.4 ADKAR, *change model***

The ADKAR change model was developed in 1998 as a tool for determining if change management activities were producing the desired results during the process of organisational change (Prosci 2003). This model can assist changing organisations to diagnose any possible resistance to change and set development-related goals for individuals that are involved in the change process (Erskine 2013). Effective management of the people dimension of change needs managing the five keys that form the basis of the ADKAR model. Figure 3.3 below shows ADKAR's model of change management.



**Figure 3.3: ADKAR's change management model**

**Source: Adapted from resources developed by the Department of State Growth, Tasmania (2015)**

The next section discusses the five keys of the ADKAR model:

*Awareness of the need to change:* The first level of the ADKAR change model deals with awareness of why the change is needed. According Mense and Crain-Dorough (2016), organisations going through a change process should first build awareness of the need for change. It is at this point of organisational communication where employees are made to understand why change is needed. It is also important to note that when awareness is built, each change team leader should make assessment as to where the change may be adopted and where it will be resisted (Daft & Marcic 2009:309). This means that change leaders need to be very observant about the organisation's happenings and what is being communicated informally.

*Desire to participate and support the change:* The second level of the ADKAR change model deals with the desire to participate and support the change. This desire is influenced by several differing factors, such as unhappiness with the current state, imminent negative consequences, previous experience with change and the impact it may have caused, enhanced compensation and job security (Hiatt 2006). During this

level of the change process, it is important for change leaders to listen and understand the concerns and misunderstandings that employees may have. By communicating and addressing these concerns and misunderstandings, change leaders will be creating a conducive platform for change acceptance (Bass & Riggio 2006). It is at this level that failure to present opportunities to focus on change may be clouded by barriers to change.

*Knowledge of how change looks like:* The third level of the ADKAR change model deals with knowledge on how the change enables employees to understand what change is and how it will impact their current roles within the organisation. Jean-Marie, Sider and Desir (2015) assert that education should address the knowledge, behaviours, skills needed to function in the new environment and ways to address problems that may arise during the process of change. This education should be provided in a form of training, workshops, classroom instructions, internal newsletters and internal communication portals (Partow-Navid & Slusky 2009). A broader access to this information will enhance the learning process.

*Ability to implement change on a day-to-day basis:* The fourth level of the ADKAR change model deals with the ability to implement change on a day-to-day basis. According to Voehl and Harrington (2016), this level puts more emphasis on the application of new skills, processes and behaviours that have been learned. During this level, employees need time to practice, while at the same time learning from change managers who ensure that they understand their new roles and responsibilities, system change processes and new technologies that they require to support their day-to-day functions (Bennett & Bush 2014). Change managers and management are responsible for eliminating any barriers that may weaken this process.

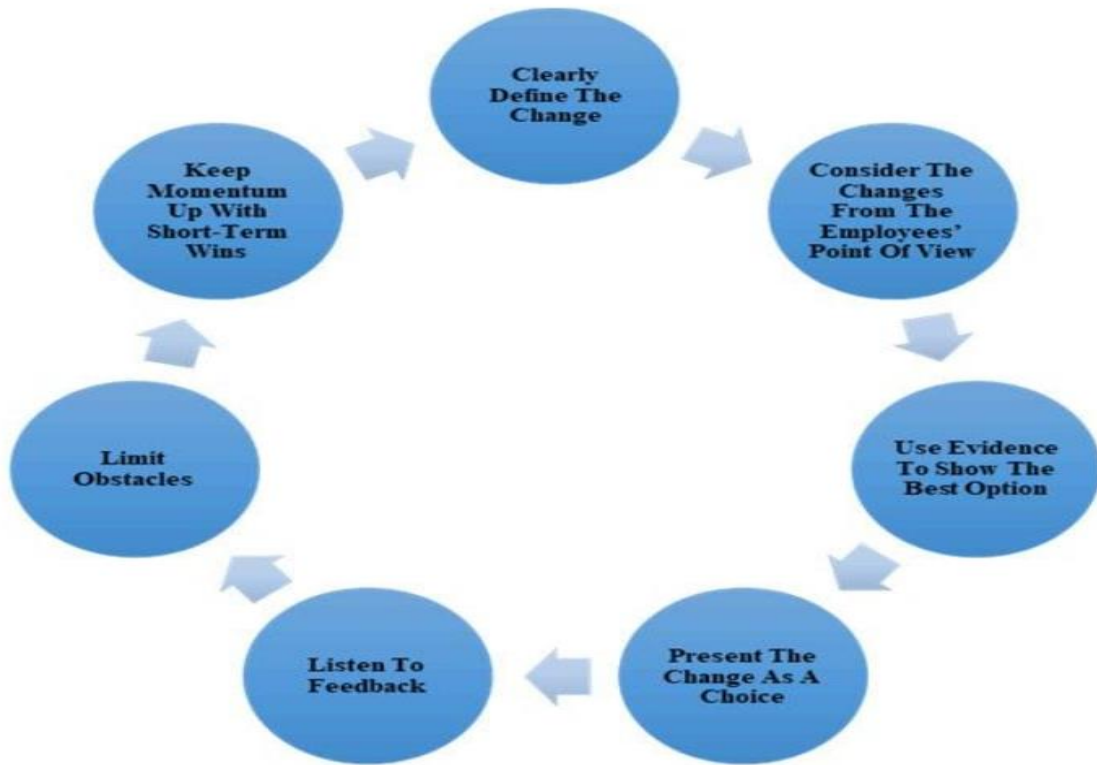
*Reinforcement to keep the change in place:* The last level of the ADKAR change model deals with the reinforcement to keep change in place. This reinforcement happens mainly around employees' reward and recognition programs for doing the job well.

This recognition can happen from personal, celebrations, compensation and benefits for having a good relationship with their colleagues and managers. The success of the intended change is defined by this level of the ADKAR model of change model (Dworkin1998; Hooper & Potter 2000; Dweck 2006).

#### **3.6.1.5 Nudge's change theory**

Out of the many models that were reviewed, the researcher found Nudge's more relevant for this study. Nudge's change theory articulates the change process in a more attractive and efficient way. This is because the theory, though not too different from the other models, is more employee-oriented (Hanson 2019). While it should be accepted that there is no change model that can meet all requirements during the process of change, Nudge's theory addresses elements that are key to employees during a change process (Kamudin 2006).

The basic assumption of Nudge's change theory is that employees should be tagged along the change process rather than being enforced on them in a traditional manner. The fundamental premise of Nudge's Theory in the context of this study is that it is employee-oriented and addresses the need of communication during organisational change. The theory was used to assess how communication was handled during the merger of Telkom Business/Enterprise and Business Connexion. Figure 3.4 below, shows Nudge change theory.



**Figure 3.4: Nudge Change Theory**

**Source: Adapted from Watson (2018)**

Nudge's seven-step change theory is discussed below.

### **Step 1: Clearly define the change**

*Communication before change:* Reasons for change must be communicated. In the case of mergers, employees should be informed of the reasons why change is necessary (Datta 1991). For example, dwindling revenues, better product offerings, and market expansions are some of the reasons to be communicated to the employees before change happens. According to Mark and Mirvis (2012), the goal for management is not just to implement change, but to do so in a manner that will garner support from the employees. For them to embrace change, they need to have a full understanding as to why it is necessary.

## **Step 2: Consider change from employee's point of view**

*Employee engagement and involvement:* This step deals with taking the employees' views into consideration before engaging in any change process. By doing this, change managers endorse the view "people are our greatest asset" (Guest 2014:53). Getting employees involved in the change process entails taking what is already known about their work culture, structure, responsibilities and skills in order to engage them regarding their views on the impending change. Employees feel valued when they are made part of the organisation by having their voices heard (Guest 2014). Academics agree that employees will react more positively to change when they are involved in the process (Clampitt, DeKock & Cashman 2000; Krizan, Merrier & Williams 2007; Oreg & Goldenberg 2015).

## **Step 3: Use evidence to show the best options**

*Presenting a business case for change:* Once management knows how to present the change to fit with the employee's working culture, they need to gather evidence to prove how useful the change is to them (Kotter & Cohen 2015). Management needs to gather information about the employees current work performance and compare that with predicted effects of change. By presenting these to the employees, they become aware of why change was necessary in the first place and why the cause of action to effect change was in their best interest. The information will assure employees that while change is needed, it cannot be achieved without their involvement and that their ideas, energy and behaviour play an integral part of the change process (Russel & Russe 2006).

## **Step 4: Present the change as a choice**

*Communication during change:* Presentation of change as a choice to employees. This step suggests that change should not be enforced on employees but be presented to them as a choice. Vakola and Paraskevas (2018) agree that if change is forced upon employees, it will breed resentment to the change itself and the organisation's management. For this to be avoided, change should be presented in a way that employees understand and respond well to. Authors assert that management

should communicate change regularly, consistently, in a clear and concise manner (Akingbola, Rogers & Baluch 2019).

### **Step 5: Listen to feedback**

*Listening to employees' feedback and their experiences as the process unfolds:* Irrespective of whether change was accepted or rejected, management should always be open to any form of feedback coming from the employees. According to Hiatt and Creasey (2003), when employees are afforded the opportunity to provide their feedback regarding change, they feel valued as the organisation's stakeholders and that their opinions matter. This will in turn make them willing to give change a chance (Darnell 2012). This is even more critical for customer facing employees within the organisation, as this will assist in helping the customers understand how the change will impact their relationship with the organisation and the services being rendered to them.

### **Step 6: Limit obstacles**

*Based on employees' feedback, remove obstacles for change:* Kinley and Ben-Hur (2015) observe that before and during the change process, management should try to limit or remove any obstacles that may impact on change. For change to be effective, employees need to immediately apply the process that comes with change. This will be possible only if obstacles to change are removed so that the employees' enthusiasm to change does not plummet. The removal of obstacles can be achieved when management make the transition to the new way of doing things possible, by assessing what might get into the employees' way and hinder the process of applying the new change processes (Strobel 2015).

### **Step 7: Keep momentum up with short-term wins**

*Communication after change:* Communicate short term wins and achievements. This step deals with management's assurance that change is maintained. To achieve this, management should plan for short-term goals and objectives which can be celebrated once achieved. This should keep the new way of doing things in check until things start to normalise (Kotter 2012).



While all other models are useful for organisational change, the researcher found the merger between Telkom Business/Enterprise and Business Connexion the best case study to test Nudge's change model/theory.

When organisations apply this theory during organisational change such as mergers and acquisitions, this helps employees realise the importance of change. When employees are made to understand why change is necessary, they are given a choice to promote a stronger bond with the organisation and its other stakeholders, including customers and partners.

### **3.7 Change communication**

According to Christensen (2014), change communication refers to a process where information is shared with individual employees during the planned change situations. In times of change, which could be a merger and acquisition, the need for information might increase significantly (Simoes & Esposito 2014). Hubbard and Purcell (2011:31) perceive employee communication as a "psychological contract" between the organisation and its employees. This means that at any given time, including during the process of organisational change, the organisation should feel indebted to communicating important information to its employees. When this communication happens, there are increased chances that change will be embraced and successfully implemented (Lewis 2000).

Academic researchers and scholars agree on the importance of communication during the process of organisational change (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois & Callan 2004; Goodman & Truss 2004; Adler & Gundersen 2008). While there is increasing research about change communication (Barret 2002; Proctor & Doukakis 2003; Nelissen & Van Selm 2008:307), other studies on the subject assert that there is a growing awareness regarding the need for adequate communication during an organisational change process (Belmiro 2000; Heatfield 2019). It is worth noting that the role of communication has drastically changed over the years. According to Russ (2008), basic organisational communication has now become a political instrument for organisations and their management. This means that where the primary objective of internal communication was to inform employees, change communication has become

a more complex phenomenon because change touches on employee's emotional level (Asl 2015).

Change communication is more emotional in the sense that more often, it is aimed at informing employees about new changes that may affect them, physically (moving offices), financially (new terms of employment) and emotionally (mergers and acquisitions) that may imply that employees are facing completely uncertain situations at their workplace (Armstrong 2006).

Available literature agrees that the main objective of change communication should be to change the employee's behaviour and facilitate new patterns in accordance with the outcomes of the desired change (Quirke 1996; Morgan 1998; Lewis 2000). It is only when employees are ready to adapt to change that their work life in the organisation will be successful.

For employees to accept and adapt to change, there must be an individual acceptance of the change process, that is, every employee needs to accept that change is indeed necessary. The study conducted by other academics discovered factors that have an impact on employee reaction to organisational change (Piderit 2000:788; Rashid Sambasivan & Johari 2003; Devos, Buelens & Bouckennooghe 2007). These factors include job satisfaction, organisational commitment, rejection and receptivity. The study by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002:474) revealed that individual employees' positive reaction (reception) to change may influence their commitment to change and their overall behavioural support to organisational change.

Hence it was discovered in other studies (Clampitt, DeKock & Cashman 2000; Elving 2005) that employees' negative reaction has been observed as the main driver to resistance to change. To reduce this resistance, organisations need to have a well-structured communication strategy that is aimed at effectively communicating organisational change.

### **3.8 Trust relationship**

Various academics assert that the trust relationship between the organisation and its employees is important for the success of a merger process (Stahl, Larsson, Kremershof & Sitkin 2011; Chen & Tjosvold 2006). According to Hodges (2008:1026), when the organisation consistently communicates with its employees about goals and strategies it intends to implement, employees feel valued and respected and therefore it reduces the possibility of them leaving the organisation. On the other hand, when there is no effective communication about the organisation's strategies and changes, the organisation may be unsettled by issues such as (a), level of anxiety, (b), uncertainty, (c), low employee morale, (d), employee performance, (e), employee turnover and (f) absenteeism.

#### **3.8.1 Level on anxiety**

Authors opine that employee anxiety remains one of the factors experienced across almost all major stages, that is before, during and after a merger (Venzin, Vizzaccaro & Rutschmann 2018; Steynberg & Veldsman 2011). Change can be very stressful to employees and may generate fear and uncertainty. While some employees thrive on change, others may feel threatened by what they perceive change to bring (Schweiger 2002). Studies show that during the change process, there is often evidence of employees fear of the future, rather than the actual change itself (Brown 2011; Erturk 2008:467; Elving 2005:134). This level of anxiety and fear can be curbed by effective communication during the merger stages.

#### **3.8.2 Uncertainty**

Goyel and Joshi (2012:235) observe that lack of effective communication during organisational change may result in employees experiencing uncertainty due to new culture, new management style and a new environment, which may lead to them being less interested in their work. According to Meinert (2017), uncertainty among employees may be created by rumours and the grapevine. It is for this reason that merging organisations should make a concerted effort to communicate changes that may be experienced as a result of the merger (Weber, Rachman-Moore & Tarba 2012; Brahma & Srivastava 2007).

When this is communicated, levels of uncertainty decrease, which could lead to improved post-merger performance (Weber et al 2012). This means that effective communication is crucial to alleviate any forms of uncertainties during a merger process.

### ***3.8.3 Low employee morale***

According to Vasantham (2014), employee morale refers to the total satisfaction that the employee derives from the job, the prevailing job environment and factors that appeal to individual ambitions. During any change processes, regular communication with key stakeholders, notably employees, is critical (Rubinshtein 2011). In most cases, decisions regarding mergers drag on, communication is lacking and employee morale is destroyed in the process. When employee morale is low, this can gradually destroy commitment to the organisation, negatively affect products and services that the organisation offers and alienate the customers that the organisation serves (Rogelberg 2016:971). This may result in employees leaving the organisation for greener pastures, in the quest of searching for organisations that values their patronage (Saeed & Waseem 2014). When this happens, the organisation may find itself spending more time searching for potential candidates to fill the gap that was created by those who left (Munck 2001).

### ***3.8.4 Employee performance***

Employee performance is the actual results of individual employees obtained when measured against its intended goals and objectives (Straub 2007). Employee performance has a direct impact on some aspects of the organisation such as (a), financial profits, (b), product market performance, (c), stakeholder return performance and (d) organisational market share (Andre 2017:210). It is for this reason that effective employee communication should take centre stage, especially during mergers and acquisitions (Mumm & Beuerlein 2004). When employee communication fails, grapevine or office gossip takes over (Karmakar & Datta 2012:350).

### **3.8.5 Employee turnover**

Mathis and Jackson (2003) define employee turnover as the movement of employees either inside or outside of the organisation. Staff turnover can be due to a range of factors including organisational change, career opportunities, lack of communication within the organisation, geographical and personal reasons (Straub 2007). Numerous authors assert that management should introduce communication programs that are intended to reduce uncertainty for employees by keeping them updated with the merger process (Bartels, Douwes, de Jong & Pruyn 2006). This would lead to employees believing that the culture and values of the merged organisation fit well with the one before the merger, therefore strengthening employee's identification with the new (merged) organisation (Cole & Bruch 2006; Chan, 2006; Olkkonen 2006).

### **3.8.6 Absenteeism**

Lack of effective communication during organisational change has a negative impact on employee behaviour, resulting in counter-productive practices such as absenteeism and reduced job performance (Nikandrou, Papalexandris, & Dimitris 2000). On the other hand, effective employee communication can lessen the negative impact (Etschmaier 2010). Other authors agree that when employees feel that communication does not exist during the merger, they gradually withdraw themselves from the organisation (Griffeth, Hom & Gaetner 2000). When this happens, employees' absenteeism increases. Management has an important role to play in ensuring that there is effective communication during the merger to avoid this kind of employee behaviour (Dahl 2011).

## **3.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter focused on a review of literature on the subject of employee communications during organisational change and reflected on the work of scholars who have written extensively on the subject. Scholars highlight the significant role employee communication plays during the process of organisational change.

Drastic changes resulting from mergers and acquisitions can be particularly challenging without an effective communication strategy in place due to the emotional and psychological effects such changes have on employees. Literature recommends

the need for organisations to prioritise employee communications in the period leading up to the merger, during the transition as well as post the merger in order to ensure buy in and ownership of the process by employees.

The review also looked at the theoretical framework that guides the study and relevant concepts in order to create a context for the study. The next chapter discusses the methodology that was used to collect and analyse data, including how issues dealing with ethics in research were handled.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapters 1 and 2 provided an introduction and context to the study, while chapter 3 focused specifically on the literature reviewed. This chapter focuses on the research methodology employed in the study. This includes a brief discussion on the philosophical approach adopted by the researcher to inform the design, as well as methods of collecting and analysing data. The study uses dialectical pluralism, which is a perspective that views reality as plural and dynamic according to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2014). The fundamental premise of this perspective is about finding ways of assimilating similarities and differences from different perspectives in a study (Johnson 2012). In the context of this study it was important to get insight from different viewpoints to enhance understanding and improve the outcomes of the research. This explains the decision to use a mixed methods design for the study, where both quantitative and qualitative methodologies are employed. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how ethical issues were dealt with in the research.

#### **4.2 Research design**

Johnson (2015:156) refers to dialectic pluralism as a “multi-paradigmatic perspective” as it brings an integration of divergent perspectives in a study. This perspective emphasises the need to listen, interact and learn from other perspectives to achieve win-win solutions (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, Tucker & Icenogle (2014:1). For this study it means leaning on different perspectives to get a more robust understanding of the research problem. Dialectic plural fits very well with mixed methods research both in its narrow definition or broad definition according to Johnson (2012:753).

Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017:107) identify four different mixed methods designs researchers typically use when deciding to mix methods: (1), convergent parallel, (2) explanatory sequential, (3) exploratory sequential and (4) emergent. Convergent parallel designs are designs where quantitative and qualitative strands of the research are performed independently and results brought together in the overall

interpretation. Explanatory sequential is where, in the first phase, quantitative research and analysis is done, followed by a second phase of qualitative research and analysis, and qualitative research is used to explain the results of the quantitative research. Exploratory sequential is where in the first phase qualitative research and analysis is conducted and quantitative research and analysis is conducted in the second phase to help test or generalise findings of qualitative research. With the emergent design, which is a design chosen for this study, in a traditional quantitative or qualitative study, strands of the research are added to another to enhance the overall design. Johnson & Schoonenboom (2016:587) acknowledge that as with any research, a design a researcher uses in a study can be regarded as unique to that study.

When using mixed methods designs, researchers opine that there are two basic fundamental types of research approaches namely, quantitative and qualitative (Gay, Mills & Airasian 2011; Patton 2002). These two approaches may be applied both in the same study in an approach called mixed methods (Gay et al 2006). Creswell (2009) adds that mixed methods approaches are perceived to be the best blend of the traditional quantitative and qualitative type approaches. The next section discusses these approaches as they apply to this study.

#### **4.2.1 Mixed methods**

In research, a research design is followed by the specific research method or methods that include forms of data collection, analysis and interpretation that the researcher proposes for the study (Creswell 2014). This study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to collect, interpret/analyse and present data.

Mixed methods research refers to a research method that uses both quantitative and qualitative data in order to answer a certain question or sets of questions. According to (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska & Creswell 2005:224), this method "involves the collection, analysis and integration of quantitative and qualitative data in a single study".

Researchers who use mixed methods do so in order to add the meanings of words, pictures and narrative to numbers (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004:24). Pedro (2013) states that mixed method research is deemed useful and suitable by researchers as it



helps to fully explore or explain the phenomenon being investigated, more so, when the phenomenon is of a complex nature.

Seawright (2016) agrees that combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods helps researchers to supplement the limitations of each single method. This combination also allows researchers' results to be generalised for future studies and examinations. For this study, the researcher took advantage of this benefit. This approach is beneficial in that it assists in qualitatively exploring (through semi-structured interviews) the phenomenon where it was not adequately quantitatively described (in questionnaires). The two methods employed in the study are briefly discussed below.

#### ***4.2.2 Quantitative method***

Babbie (2015) asserts that quantitative methods put emphasis on measurable phenomena that are statistical, mathematical and numerical in nature. With a quantitative design, researchers analyse data collected using questionnaires, surveys and polls by manipulating statistical data using mathematical calculations (Richards & Munsters 2010). An example of a quantitative method is a questionnaire sent to randomly selected employees of an organisation, requesting them to complete statements relating to communications within the merged South African organisation. The determination of questionnaire respondents (sample) is discussed in section 4.4.5 of this study. Data collected was captured on SPSS (Statistical Program for the Social Science) program for analysis and interpretation. Histograms, graphs and charts generated from the SPSS program were used for data presentation. This is further discussed in Chapter .

#### ***4.2.3 Qualitative method***

Klenke (2008) states that qualitative research relies on interpretation as it is more subjective as opposed to quantitative research, which is more objective.

Although the subjective nature of qualitative research has been argued for some time, it is important to note that for this study, data collected and analysed from this method was interpreted from the subjective rather than objective point of view (Babione 2014).

According to Grady (1998), qualitative research focuses on understanding the “why” of a situation, unlike the quantitative research which looks for prediction and control. Survey questionnaires were structured in a way that sought to answer the “what” questions, while the interview questions were structured in a way that sought to answer the “how” questions. The qualitative method is important in assisting the researcher to uncover unknown areas of the topic under study.

### **4.3 Research population**

In research, a population refers to the entire pool from which data can be collected (Strydom & Venter 2002). A population may also refer to an entire group of objects, events or people from which the researcher aims to obtain or collect data (Kempf-Leonard 2016). Basu, Pan and Wang (2014) agree that a population can be viewed as an aggregate observation of subjects that are grouped together by a common feature. For this study, a population refers to 5200 employees working at the merged organisation, an organisation where the researcher collected data from. According to Creswell (2003) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011), research population can be classified into two categories namely, target population and accessible population. The two categories are explained below.

#### **4.3.1 Target population**

According to Mouton (1996), population in research refers to a collection of objects, individuals, and events that have the same common characteristics, which the researcher finds interest in studying. Wallace and Van Fleet (2012) further argue that in any research study, population is not haphazardly determined but is defined by the research questions and/or the hypothesis. It is important to note that the population for this research study is all employees working for the merged South African organisation, which are 5200 in total. Population can be classified in three ways: (a) target population, (b) accessible population and (c) units of analysis.

According to Du Plooy (2009:56), target population is “the entire class or groups of units, objects or subjects” to which the researcher intends generalising the findings. For this study, the target population is all 5200 employed by the merged organisation.

#### **4.3.2 Accessible population**

Du Plooy (2009) refers to the population to which the researcher has access. For this study, the accessible population is individuals based at the head office in Centurion, which is 2000 in number. These included employees at operational level as well as Senior Project Managers, Senior Service Managers, Senior Sales Managers, and Senior Solutions Managers.

#### **4.3.3 Units of analysis**

Units of analysis are things/individuals examined in the study to create summary descriptions of all such units and to explain the differences between them (Rubbin & Babbie 2007). These are major entities that are being analysed in the study. For this study, units of analysis are individual respondents and participants.

#### **4.3.4 Sampling**

Sampling is the way of selecting units (example, people and organisations) from a population of interest (Pagano 2013), so that by studying them a fair generalisation of the results may be arrived at. Since researchers deploy different methodologies in their studies, quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods or triangulation, it is important for them to carefully determine their samples as these are related closely to a research methodology.

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods, therefore for the quantitative part of the research a probability sampling methodology (random) sampling was used, to ensure that every individual had an equal probability of being chosen and a non-probability sampling method (convenience) sampling was applied for the qualitative part of the research.

Since the study uses mixed-methods, two sampling methods were selected, namely (a) probability sampling for quantitative data and (b) non-probability sampling for qualitative data. Thompson (2012) argues that probability sampling is a form of sampling that allows each individual equal probability of being included in the study. This sampling is used in quantitative studies where every individual is afforded the opportunity to participate in the study. The main advantage of this sampling method

was that no individual was examined in the same study more than once. For example, respondents who tried to complete the questionnaire more than once, had the following message prompted “you have already completed this questionnaire”.

For the quantitative part of this study, a sample of 241 employees was selected through the Calculator.net sample calculator using a 95% confidence level and 5.93% margin of error. Researchers agree that this calculation is sufficient for social research (Rea & Parker 2014 ; Sauro & Lewis 2012).

A non-probability sampling method was used for the qualitative part of the research. Singh (2007) states that one of the characteristics of non-probability sampling is that it does not include the process of random selection, meaning that the probability of selecting each sampling unit is not known. This type of sampling is used in qualitative methods where the researcher conveniently or non-randomly chooses units of analysis to be examined or interviewed. Selecting the ten (10) employees to participate in interviews followed a non-probability sampling method. Participants were selected based on their extensive knowledge of the subject matter, and they were accessible and willing to be interviewed. In the end only six (6) participated in interviews because four went on leave during that period.

Researchers use the sample size to generate data which is needed to address the research questions. The sample should be generative in a way that will draw useful and meaningful cases, context, scenarios and illustrations (Mason 2002:121). Since this study requires the sample size that address a mixed method approach, both qualitative and quantitative requirements were considered.

According to Mason (2002:134), the ideal sample size for qualitative research methods is when sampling is done to the point of "theory-saturation", which is the point where the participants' responses do not provide any new information regarding the phenomenon being studied. Mason (2002:140) further states that it is expected for qualitative research to have a smaller sample size than the quantitative method due to practical considerations such as the number of face-to-face (one-on-one) interviews the researcher may practically have at a time. On the other hand, it is argued that researchers for quantitative studies worry about how large a sample should be in order to conduct a reasonably good survey (Nardi 2018).

Decisions on the sample size are based on practical considerations such as time constraints, research funds and other resources required in conducting a study. This is also determined by the type of survey. The benefit of this type of survey is that many respondents can be sampled.

#### **4.3.5 Data collection instruments**

There are various procedures of collecting mixed-methods data (Richards & Schmidt 2002). The most common instruments used in mixed-methods research include the use of open-ended questions, closed-ended questions, classroom observations and interviews. These procedures are used to supplement each other and boost data validity and dependability (Flick 2006; Richards & Schmidt 2002; Gillham 2000). Generally, quantitative data is gathered by using close-ended questions, while qualitative data is collected by using open-ended questions, interviews and classroom observations. For this study, both open-ended and close-ended questions were used.

#### **4.3.6 Interviews**

To collect qualitative data about the phenomenon under study, the researcher used face-to-face (one-on-one) interviews. Authors opine that there are three types of interviews for qualitative data collection (Guest, Namey & Mitchell 2012; Salmons 2015; Galletta & Cross, 2013; Wengraf 2001). These are (1) structured interviews, (2) semi-structured interviews, and (3) unstructured interviews.

##### **4.3.6.1 Structured interviews**

Structured interviews, also referred to as qualitative research interviews, use the same set of predetermined and standardised questions that the interviewer compiles before the interviews are conducted (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016). During the interviews, the interviewer reads out each question and records the interviewee's responses on a schedule that is standardised. The questions are asked exactly as they are written, and in the same tone of voice that do not indicate any bias on the part of the interviewer.

#### **4.3.6.2 Semi-structured interviews**

According to Saunders et al (2016), semi-structure interviews differ slightly from structured interviews as the former uses predetermined standardised questions, the latter uses themes and key questions that do not follow any particular order. During the interview, the researcher may omit or add certain questions depending on the specific context being studied in relation to the research topic. The order of questions may vary from interview to interview depending on the flow of the conversation. In cases where the researcher decides to ask additional questions, this is done to further explore the concepts or constructs being studied. In semi-structured interviews, data is collected by means of audio-recording the conversations or taking notes to capture the interviewee's responses.

#### **4.3.6.3 Unstructured interviews**

According to Klenke (2008), unstructured interviews are aimed at eliciting the interviewee's authentic experiences. With unstructured interviewing, the researcher's quest is to obtain true meanings regarding the interviewee's experiences, attitudes and behaviours. For this study, the researcher used open-ended questions that were constructed based on the context developing throughout the interview rather than using predetermined structured questions. These open-ended questions are the two main exploratory questions stated in section 4.5. These questions are: (1) What was the communication strategy used during the merger? and (2) What is the internal stakeholders' level of satisfaction with communication channels used during the merger?

By using unstructured questions, the researcher considered some of the advantages that these types of questions have, among others, that they uncover important issues that can eventually guide future research, they provide insight into general problem-solving method and they are able to draw complex responses from the interviewee. It is important to note that while face-to-face interviews continue to be widely used in qualitative studies, they have their own advantages and disadvantages. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below list some of the advantages and disadvantages highlighted by different researchers.

**Table 4.1: Advantages of face-to-face interviews**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Participants' own words can be captured (verbatim)	Holloway (2005)
Conducted at the convenience of participants	Babbie (2007)
Interviewer can be guided by participants' body language	Maruyana and Ryan (2014)
Interviewer is motivated by personal contact	Needham and Dransfield (2000)
Employment of different techniques to solicit responses	Bernard (2000)

**Source: Own compilation**

**Table 4.2: Disadvantages of face-to-face interviews**

<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Interview bias	David & Sutton (2004)
May create stage fright for both the interviewer and participants	Bernard (2000)
Participants taking non-stop during the interview	Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree (2014)
Participants feeling uneasy about the anonymity of responses	Clark (2006)
Participants' no-show, even after confirmation that they will participate in the interview	Seidman (2006)

**Source: Own compilation**

For the qualitative part of the study, the researcher opted to conduct face-to-face interviews due to their distinctive advantages such as (a) hints and guides provided by participants' body language, (b) participants' convenience to attend interviews, (c) participants' own words can be captured, (d) participants' personal contact/interaction and (e) different techniques applicable during the interviews (Maruyana & Ryan 2014; Babbie 2007; Holloway 2005; Needham & Dransfield 2000; Bernard 2000).

#### **4.3.7 Questionnaires**

*Questionnaires:* As stated previously, qualitative data was collected by means of questionnaires sent to randomly selected respondents (241) by email. These were self-administered questionnaires that respondents completed at their own convenient time without the presence and assistance of the researcher. Respondents were required to read on a computer a set of statements to which they were invited to respond. The researcher used this method of collecting data whilst fully aware of some of its general pitfalls. For example, there is some evidence in research studies that respondents to self-administered surveys are less likely to provide detailed answers to closed-ended questions (Czaja & Blair 2005), leading to the general conclusion that 'closed-ended questions often do not produce useful data' (Fowler 2009:72).

It is important to note that the extent to which respondents provide responses to questions/statements depends largely on the relevance of the topic to their own lived experiences. The researcher developed the questionnaire that used a 5-point Likert scale range. The 5-point Likert scale represents statements as follows: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree. The 5-point Likert scale was used as it is "generally assumed to be more reliable than a single item measurement" (Quaddus & Woodside 2015:57). This scale has also proven to be very useful in measuring attitudes, as it provides the respondents with the opportunity to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements posed to them (Van der Velde, Jansen & Anderson 2004). Like face-to-face interviews, online questionnaires have their own advantages and disadvantages. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 below list some of the advantages and disadvantages agreed with by different authors.



**Table 4.3: Advantages of online questionnaires**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Online questionnaires are cost-effective (cheaper)	Babbie (2007)
Easy to create and user friendly	Roberts and Allen (2015); Gillham (2000)
Data can be collected quicker	Nayak (2019)
Geographical spread of respondents is easy and possible	Wright (2005)

**Source: Own compilation**

**Table 4.4: Disadvantages of online questionnaires**

<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Respondents may disregard the questionnaires and not complete them	Nayak (2019)
Maintenance of data confidentiality	Wright (2005)
Adherence to ethical clearance processes	Mahon (2014)
Respondents may not give consent to participate	Varnhagen, Gushta, Daniels, Peters, Parmar and Law (2005)

**Source: Own compilation**

For the quantitative part of the study, the researcher chose to use online questionnaires due to their distinctive advantages such as (a) quicker collection of data, (b) easy creation of questionnaires, (c) the cost-effectiveness, and (d) questionnaires can be easily spread across respondents (Nayak 2019; Robert & Allen 2015; Babbie 2007; Wright 2005; Gillham 2000).

## **4.4 Conducting interviews**

The researcher followed a five-step process in collecting qualitative data.

The steps included: (a), developing the interview schedule, (b), piloting the semi-structured interviews, (c), scheduling face-to-face interviews with participants, (d), conducting face-to-face interviews and (e) transcribing interviews for data analysis purposes.

### ***4.4.1 Developing the interview schedule***

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), interviews provide researchers with detailed and rich qualitative data to understand participants' experiences, how those experiences are described and meanings derived from them. Interviews play a central role in collecting rich qualitative data that helps in answering research questions and achieving study objectives (Seidman 2013). To achieve this, authors advise that a qualitative researcher takes careful consideration in developing an interview schedule that will seek to achieve the objective of the study (Patton 2015; Brickmann & Kvale 2015). For this study, the researcher developed the interview schedule that considers the qualitative research question:

**RQ 3:** How did internal stakeholders perceive the communication during the merger?

### ***4.4.2 Piloting the semi-structured interviews***

Once the interview schedule has been developed, it is advisable for the researcher to properly pilot or test the schedule on several respondents prior to the main data collection (Pontin 2000). This testing allows the researcher to establish if the interview schedule is clear, understandable and able to answer the research questions.

If it happens that during the pilot interview, the researcher establishes that the schedule does not answer research questions as intended, the researcher can make changes to the schedule (Kvale 1996). For this study, the researcher used participant first interview as a pilot and there were no changes to the schedule required after the pilot.

#### **4.4.3 Scheduling face-to-face interviews with participants**

Successful face-to-face interviews begin with careful planning that considers the availability of participants (Bryman 2012). Since interviews form the basis for data collection, the researcher must plan and schedule dates at which interviews will be conducted (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009). Once the schedule has been agreed with participants, the researcher can proceed with conducting interviews as per the schedule (Smith et al 2009). For this study, the researcher confirmed participants' availability regarding the date, time and venue of the interviews. Table 4.5 below shows the schedule that the researcher followed to conduct the interviews.

**Table 4.5: Face-to-face interview schedule**

<b>Participant No</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>1</b>	08 Aug 2019	Conference Room	15h00-16h00	20 min 15 sec
<b>2</b>	09 Aug 2019	Boardroom	13h00-14h00	28 min 23 sec
<b>3</b>	12 Aug 2019	Boardroom	13h00-14h00	27 min 39 sec
<b>4</b>	13 Aug 2019	Conference Room	14h30-15h30	32 min 12 sec
<b>5</b>	14 Aug 2019	Conference Room	15h00-16h00	37 min 24 sec
<b>6</b>	16 Aug 2019	Conference Room	13h30-14h30	29 min 12 sec

After the schedule was drawn up, the researcher commenced with interviewing participants. According to Smith et al (2009), it is critical for the researcher to commence the interview process by informing participants of (a) the reason for the interview, (b) the format the interview will take, (c) that there is no wrong or right answers and that (d) the interview's aim is to hear participants' experiences. It is also important for the researcher to inform participants of the length of the interview (Holloway & Wheeler 2010).

For this study, the researcher followed all the points listed above. The researcher observed that by applying this, participants were made to feel relaxed and were at ease in answering all questions asked.

#### ***4.4.4 Transcribing interviews for data analysis purposes***

Halcomb and Davidson (2006:38) define interview transcription as the process of "reproducing spoken words, such as those from an audiotaped interview, into written text". However, other authors consider that "representing audible talk as written words requires reduction, interpretation and representation" in order to make written text more readable and meaningful (Bailey 2008:127). This representation means that the transcripts are not neutral records of events but rather a reflection of the researcher's interpretation of data (Bailey 2008). For this study, the researcher transcribed all audio recordings for the six interviews. These transcriptions formed an important part of data analysis, interpretation and presentation for this study.

#### **4.5 Conducting the survey**

Quantitative data collection was used by means of questionnaires. The use of questionnaires is one of the widely adoptable data collection approaches (Naoum 2007). Fellows and Liu (2008) observed that questionnaires are always used to find opinions, views and facts of a problem on the grouping of specific respondents. Online questionnaires were used for this study to answer the following research questions:

**RQ 1:** What was the communication strategy used during the merger?

**RQ 2:** What was the internal stakeholders' level of satisfaction with communication channels used during the merger?

The questionnaire was developed in such a way that it draws respondent's responses about the three phases of the merger process, that is, before, during and after the merger.

#### **4.5.1 The pilot study questionnaire**

According to Brynard and Hanekom (2006), it is necessary for the researcher to have a preliminary investigation of the intended area under study. This should involve the respondents who will be required to complete the questionnaire. The preliminary investigation is necessary to determine whether the research purpose is clear (Ethridge 2004).

This will also assist in determining the topic is researchable and whether the data collection measurements are appropriate. Ethridge (2004) continues to suggest that online questionnaires should be tested beforehand to determine if it works as anticipated by the researcher. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) concur by stating that the pre-testing of the online questionnaire (pilot study) is necessary to (a), detect any possible flaws in the measurement procedures, (b), identify any unclear and ambiguity in formulated statements and (c) presents an opportunity for necessary changes to be made. The following process was followed in the pre-testing of the online questionnaire for this study:

A statistician was requested to check the questionnaire to ensure that its wording, content and relevance of statements were appropriate for the purpose of the research. Employees who are known by the researcher to have extensive knowledge in research were asked to comment on the questionnaire layout, formulated statements and the rating scales used in the questionnaire. Twenty (20) questionnaires were sent to carefully selected respondents to test the (a), clarity of statements used, (b), time taken to complete the questionnaire, (c), whether all respondents received or responded to the questionnaire and (d) any other issue(s) that could have a negative impact on the respondents. Feedback was received from respondents and was used to make required changes before it could be sent to 241 respondents who were targeted to respond to the online questionnaire.

## 4.6 Analysing qualitative data

The participant's biographical and demographical data was described in a table format. The data collected with structured interviews was analysed with a thematic analysis method and the results was presented in Chapter 5.

### 4.6.1 *Thematic analysis*

Holloway and Todres (2003) argue that since qualitative approaches are incredibly complex and diverse in nature, analysis of data collected through these approaches is equally complex. Clarke and Braun (2013) agree that thematic analysis should be seen as a fundamental method of analysing qualitative data.

It is argued that this should be the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn and master, as it provides core skills that are useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is applied to stories that develop during interview conversations and group meetings, as well as those found in written documents (Riessman 2008). It is for this reason that researchers use thematic analysis to make sense of what transpired during interviews. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a six-stage process of thematic analysis that allows for the interpretation of qualitative data collected from interviews. The stages of the thematic analysis process, as well as their related descriptions, are as follows (Braun & Clarke 2006).

**Stage 1: Familiarising yourself with your data:** Transcribing of data collected from the interviews. This process includes repeatedly reading data with the aim of noting down initial ideas shared by interview participants.

**Stage 2: Generalising initial codes:** Coding of features that are deemed interesting by the researcher in a systematic way across the entire data set, also collating data that is relevant to each code.

**Stage 3: Searching for themes:** Collating of codes into potential notable themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

**Stage 4: Reviewing themes:** Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic picture/map of the analysis.

**Stage 5: Defining and naming themes:** Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis is telling, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

**Stage 6: Producing the report:** The final stage of thematic analysis is the selection of important compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature and then producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

It is also important to test the validity and reliability of the research to ensure the credibility of the findings. Testing validity and reliability in qualitative research is different than in quantitative research (Moser & Korstjens 2017). Testing validity in qualitative research looks at issues such as the appropriateness of the tools, processes and data; whether research questions are valid, appropriateness of the methodology, sampling and method of analysis (Noble & Smith 2015). Reliability focuses on the replicability of the processes and the results (Noble & Smith 2015).

The criteria that qualitative researchers apply to measure all the above is trustworthiness (Moser & Korstjens 2017).

#### **4.7 Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (2005) assert that trustworthiness in research refers to the extent to which the researcher's findings are believable. This means that what the researcher has done in carrying out the research is deemed credible. It is therefore important for scholars and researches alike to ensure that their studies conform to acceptable standards of trustworthiness and credibility (Morrow & Smith 2000).

The next section provides a discussion on some of the elements that constitute research trustworthiness; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

#### **4.7.1 Credibility**

In research studies, credibility refers to the confidence that can be attached to the truth of the research findings (Macnee & McCabe 2008; Holloway & Wheeler 2002). The purpose of credibility is to establish whether the findings of the research represent information received from participants' original data and is the correct interpretation of their original views. For this study, the researcher established data credibility by adopting a credibility strategy called member checking. Member checking is a process that qualitative researchers undertake to ensure data credibility (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2007).

This process entails the inclusion of participants' voices in the analysis and interpretation of data. In so doing, the researcher's bias in data analysis and interpretation is eliminated (Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

In this study, member checking was included as part of the data collection process by way of two main approaches; specific questioning style that the researcher employed during face-to-face interviews and by relying on key participants to facilitate and verify the understanding of data as the research process was unfolding.

#### **4.7.2 Transferability**

According to Tappen (2011:160), transferability refers to "the applicability of the findings to other situations and other people". Speziale and Carpenter (2007) agree that transferability is the notion that the findings of a study have a probability of being applied to similar studies or situations. This is a component of qualitative research where samples are purposefully selected in order to describe a phenomenon within a context. It can be concluded that transferability is equivalent to external validity or generalisability in quantitative research (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston & Pierrre 2007). For this study, the researcher achieved this by carefully selecting interview participants with extensive experience within the organisation. These are participants who experienced the change process during the three phases of the merger.



#### **4.7.3 Dependability**

Dependability is the "notion that the research can be trusted over time" (Major & Savin-Baden 2010:75). This notion entails the aspect of consistency (Lincoln & Guba 2005). To achieve dependability, the researcher needs to check whether the analysis process is in line with the accepted standards for a design (Polit & Beck 2012). The importance of dependability in research is that when the study is dependable, it will ensure data stability over a period and under different situations. This means that the study repeated in the same context with similar methods and participants can produce similar results (Shenton 2004). To achieve this, the researcher will keep data in a secured area for a maximum period of five (5) years and check the consistency of the results of similar studies in the future.

#### **4.7.4 Confirmability**

Tobin and Begley (2004:392) states that confirmability is "concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figment of the inquirer's imagination but are clearly derived from the data". Research studies assert that confirmability of qualitative research is achieved by means of an audit trial, reflexive journal and triangulation (Bowen, 2009; Koch,2006). Bowen (2009) stated that an audit trial is useful for qualitative studies, as it offers visible evidence that the researcher did not simply pre-empt the outcome of the study. Since this is a mixed-method study, confirmability was achieved by using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect and analyse data.

#### **4.8 Analysing quantitative data**

The data collected with the questionnaire was analysed with the SPSS version 23 The data collected was presented with descriptive statistics, and analysed with inferential statistical methods.

#### **4.8.1 Descriptive statistics**

According to Vogt et al (2014), descriptive statistics refer to methods used to portray the cases in a collection of quantitative data, depicting patterns in those data in order to explore the distributions or shapes of the data to summarise the basis features of data. Researchers use descriptive statistics to makes sense of data collected through online surveys and questionnaires. Data may be depicted in the form of graphs, charts, tables, depending on the researcher's preferences. For this research study descriptive statistics was used to analyse data collected from the questionnaires and statistical calculations used to describe the distribution of the collected data of the communication questionnaire are the following:

Mean refers to the sum of all the values in a data set, divided by the number of values in that data set (Mentz & Botha 2012). The median refers to the value lying in the middle of a data set (Mentz & Botha 2012). Mode refers to set of numbers that occur most often in a data set (Mentz & Botha 2012).

Standard deviation is a measure that indicates how far a set of numbers lay apart (Mentz & Botha 2012). Skewness essentially measures the relative size of the two tails of a curve and describes the shape of a distribution were dominance in one of the tail lengths is an indication of positive or negative skewness of the curve (Mentz & Botha, 2012). Kurtosis refers to a measure of the peakedness of the probability distribution (Mentz & Botha 2012).

#### **4.8.2 Test for normality**

Normality tests were conducted to determine if the data collected through the sample was drawn from a normally distributed population. The reason is that this is a requirement of some of the statistical tests, for example two-way ANOVA (Pallant, 2016). The non-significant results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnova normality test for all the scales suggest a violation of the assumption of normality. This is an indication that non-parametrical inferential statistical methods need to be used in the data analysis (Pallant, 2016).

### **4.8.3 Inferential statistics**

Inferential statistical calculations were conducted on the quantitative data collected, with the intention to make inferences and predictions of the target population, based on the sample of data taken from the population (Leedy & Ormrod 2016; Pallant 2016). As the non-significant results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnova normality test for all the scales suggest a violation of the assumption of normality as attested to above, non-parametrical inferential statistical methods were used in the data analysis (Pallant 2016). The following non-parametric statistical methods were used to analyse the data of the Communication questionnaire:

**Spearman correlations** were conducted to determine the strength and linear relationship between the different questions of the questionnaire (Pallant 2016).

**Mann-Whitney U test:** Is a non-parametric test that uses median to compare the groups. The test "assumes that each data point within a group is sampled independently from the same underlying distribution" (Smalheiser 2017:159).

**Kruskal–Wallis Test:** Is a rank-based nonparametric analogue test that is used when the normality assumption does not seem reasonable for the data (Schlotzhauer 2009). The test can fail to detect differences between groups if data is not normally distributed.

### **4.9 Validity and reliability**

Validity and reliability are critical in any research (Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger 2010). Authors agree that a study must pass both validity and reliability tests for it to be relied on and be deemed relevant (Scherman 2007; Maree & Fraser 2004; Fraenkel & Wallen 2003). While these two terms may be somewhat confusing, they are different in both meaning and application. Questionnaires were used to obtain relevant information in the most reliable and valid manner possible (Mansour 2015:1767). It was therefore important to ensure that the questionnaire used is accurate and consistent (Field 2013:70). Validity means the research instrument, and in the case of this study, the survey questionnaire, measures what it intends to measure, in other words the extent to which it accurately describes and measures the variable it was designed to measure (Field 2013:70).

Reliability on the other hand refers to the extent to which the questionnaire provided consistent results under similar conditions (Field 2018:15). Testing for reliability looks for consistency across parts of the measuring instrument (Mansour 2015:1767). An instrument is considered reliable if the items on a scale measure the same construct (Field 2013:714). Based on these two definitions, the section below discusses how the validity and reliability of the survey questionnaire was ensured.

#### **4.9.1 Validity**

To test the validity of the questionnaire use was made of exploratory factor analysis. The objective of factor analysis is to determine the degree to which respondents answered the same questions in the same way, if the degree is high, the instrument is said to be valid (Field 2018:15). Results of the factor analysis can be found in chapter 5, section 5.3.3.

#### **4.9.2 Reliability**

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested through a Cronbach's Alpha method. Cronbach's Alpha measures internal consistency or how closely related a set of items are as a group (Field 2018:826). The consistency of employee responses across items on the different subscales was tested. Results of the Cronbach's Alpha on the different subscales can be found in chapter 5, section 5.3.4.

### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

Since the study involved employees of the merged organisation, the researcher first sought permission from the Managing Executive of the organisation to conduct the study. A signed permission letter or a research approval form is attached as Appendix A of this study.

The requesting of permission is in line with ethical considerations for any study. Miller-Cochran and Rodrigo (2017) argue that researchers conducting studies that include other people, for example employees of a firm, should first seek permission from the management of such a firm. This is to ensure that the study is conducted ethically and does not violate any employee's rights.

The next section provides a discussion on some of the elements that constitute ethical consideration in research (a), research integrity, (b), informed consent, (c), research anonymity, (d), confidentiality and (e) right to privacy.

#### ***4.10.1 Research integrity***

Research integrity is defined as the "systemic way of valuing good, right, positive behaviour and actions that will give respect to the members of the society and the nation at large in respect to the conduct of research" (Sibinga 2018:210). Ogwuche (2009) adds that research integrity refers to the conducting of research in a manner that ensures quality assurance, dignity and respect for the research conduct as well as researchers. This means that researchers must endeavour to always conduct their research in a way that is free from bias, dishonesty and untruthfulness as this may harm their research work.

#### ***4.10.2 Obtaining informed consent***

Informed consent in research provides important information to participants so that they can make the informed decisions on whether to participate in a study or not (Baez, 2002). Authors agree that to comply with the consent procedures, the consent form should be signed by potential participants only if they feel that their confidentiality will be protected and are informed, they are free to withdraw at any time from the study should they wish so (Streubert & Carpenter 2011; Hewitt 2007). The researcher must discuss confidentiality with all participants before data can be collected (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011; Kaiser 2009). For this study, the researcher discussed confidentiality with participants and they were asked to complete the consent form, confirming that their participation in the study is voluntary.

#### ***4.10.3 Research anonymity***

Rubin and Babbie (2007:76) opine that research respondents have anonymity "when the researcher cannot identify a given response with a given respondent". From a qualitative study perspective, this means that interview participants cannot be considered anonymous since the interviewer or researcher collects the information from an identifiable individual. However, from the quantitative study perspective,

anonymity can be achieved as online questionnaires or surveys cannot be used to identify respondents. For this study, anonymity was achieved by (a) ensuring that interview participants' names are not recorded on the interview schedule/guide, and (b) online questionnaires do not request any respondents' names.

#### **4.10.4 Confidentiality**

According to Smyth and Williamson (2004), confidentiality in research includes (a) maintaining confidentiality of data by ensuring that data is separated from identifiable individuals and securely saving the codes linking data to individuals, (b) ensuring that those who have access to the data, for example, statisticians, maintain its secrecy, and (c) anonymising individuals to protect their identity.

When participants and respondents in the study ascertained that data collected will be treated with utmost confidentiality, they will more likely be willing to take part in the study (Ritchie & Lewis 2003).

#### **4.10.5 Participants' right to privacy**

De Vaus (2015:61) states that "While the principles of voluntary participation and confidentiality are partly based on the principle of a person's right to privacy, the right to privacy extends beyond these matters". Privacy in research may entail that participants or respondents may not want researchers to contact them unless permission to do so has been granted. According to Blaikie (2010), researchers must always protect the interest of participants. This is done by ensuring that their anonymity is preserved and that confidentiality of data is guaranteed. This researcher will ensure that data confidentiality is guaranteed by storing it in a secured place, a computer hard drive.

#### **4.11 Chapter summary**

This chapter focused on the research methodology employed in the study. It included a brief discussion on the philosophical approach adopted by the researcher to inform the design, as well as methods of collecting and analysing data. In the context of this study it was important to get insight from different viewpoints to enhance understanding and improve the outcomes of the research. This explained the decision

to use a mixed methods design for the study, where both quantitative and qualitative methodologies are employed. The chapter concluded with a discussion on how ethical issues were dealt with in the research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the methodology that was deployed for this study was discussed. In this chapter, findings from qualitative research (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative research (questionnaire) are presented. Integrated findings from the study are presented in the end.

To answer research objectives as presented in section 5.2 below, primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with six selected participants who are some of the organisation's employees that went through the merger process. Quantitative data was collected by using online questionnaires created using the Questback tool. Online questionnaires were sent to 241 potential participants. That yielded a response rate of 42% with a total of 101 useable questionnaires. The next section discusses quantitative research findings starting with biographical and demographical data, followed by the quantitative findings. The consolidation of both quantitative and qualitative data is presented in section 5.5.

#### **5.2 Research objectives of the study**

Primary data was collected with semi-structured interviews and online questionnaires with the aim of achieving the following study objectives:

**RO 1:** To explore the communication strategy that was used during the merger.

**RO 2:** To describe the internal stakeholder's level of satisfaction with communication channels used during the merger.

**RO 3:** To explore the stakeholders' perception of communication during the merger.



The quantitative results collected with the research questionnaire are presented first, followed by the qualitative findings of the data collected with the semi-structured interviews.

### **5.3 Presentation of quantitative results**

In this section results from the quantitative data are presented. Firstly, biographical and demographical data of the respondents are presented, followed by the frequency statistics from The Merger Questionnaire items reflected in Annexure E: Table E.1- Table E.3. Data is presented in a form of percentages. In terms of calculations, it should be noted that the rounding up and down of percentages to one decimal place may result in percentages not adding up to exactly 100. At times "it may be 0.1 over or under" Blaikie (2003:52). To solve this, a second decimal place can be used to get the percentage to exactly 100. Descriptive statistics of the measuring instrument scales are then presented, followed by the findings of the reliability analysis. Inferential statistics findings from the study will be presented last.

#### ***5.3.1 Biographical and demographical data of survey respondents***

Biographical and demographical data of 101 respondents from online questionnaires are presented below.

##### ***5.3.1.1 Gender groupings of respondents***

Gender groupings of respondents are presented in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1: Gender groupings of respondents ( $n = 101$ )**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Cumulative Percentage</b>
Female	35	34.7	34.7
Male	66	65.3	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	

As reflected in Table 5.1, 65% of respondents are male and 35% are female. It was imperative for the researcher to have different gender groups represented in the study. This is based on the view by other researchers that communication is perceived differently by males and females (Basow & Rubenfield 2003).

While males are believed to have demanding voices, which are boastful and use slang language, females are believed to use good grammar, speak fluently, politely, and are soft-spoken (Popp, Donovan, Crawford, Marsh & Peele 2003). The use of both genders in the study was to provide a balanced view of how the two groupings perceive communication within the organisation.

### **5.3.1.2 Age groupings of respondents**

Age groupings of respondents are presented in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2: Age groupings of respondents ( $n = 101$ )**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
26-30 years	8	7.9	7.9
31-35 years	6	5.9	13.9
36-40 years	16	15.8	29.7
41-45 years	24	23.8	53.5
46-50 years	16	15.8	69.3
51-55 years	18	17.8	87.1
56+	13	12.9	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	

As reflected in Table 5.2, 70% of respondents are older than 41 years. This means the majority of respondents are mature and experienced. 30% percent of respondents are younger than 40.

### **5.3.1.3 Race groupings of respondents**

Race groupings of respondents are presented in Table 5.3 below.

**Table 5.3: Race groupings of respondents ( $n = 101$ )**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
African	66	65.3	65.3
Coloured	8	7.9	73.3
Indian	8	7.9	81.2
White	19	18.8	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	

As reflected in Table 5.3, the majority of respondents are African (65%) followed by whites (19%), with coloureds and Indians accounting for (8%) each.

#### **5.3.1.4 Job level groupings of respondents**

Job level groupings of respondents are presented in Table 5.4 below.

**Table 5.4: Job level groupings of the respondents ( $n = 101$ )**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Operational Specialist	36	35.6	35.6
Senior Manager	20	19.8	55.4
Specialist (Managerial level)	45	44.5	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	

As reflected in Table 5.4, the majority of the respondents are on a Specialist level (44.5%), followed by those on operational specialist level at (35.6%), Senior Management levels account for (19.8%).

#### **5.3.1.5 Years of experience groupings of respondents**

Years of experience groupings of respondents are presented in Table 5.5 below.

**Table 5.5: Years of experience groupings of respondents ( $n = 101$ )**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0-10 years	18	17.8	17.8
11-20 years	31	30.7	48.5
21-30 years	30	29.7	78.2
31-40 years	22	21.8	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	

As reflected in Table 5.5, 82% of respondents have more than 11 years' experience. There is a relationship between the years of experience finding and the age distribution of respondents as reflected in Table 5.3. The relationship may be that the older people become, the more experienced they become in certain areas of their lives.

### **5.3.1.6 Highest qualification groupings of respondents**

Highest qualification groupings of respondents are presented in Table 5.6 below.

**Table 5.6: Highest qualification groupings of respondents ( $n = 101$ )**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Certificate/Diploma	51	50.5	50.5
Bachelor's Degree	31	30.7	81.2
Honours Degree	10	9.9	91.1
Master's Degree	9	8.9	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	

As reflected in Table 5.6, respondents in this study are well educated as all of them have a qualification higher than matric. The qualification grouping shows that 50% of respondents have either a Certificate or Diploma, 31% have a Bachelor's Degree, 10% have an Honours Degree and 9% have a Master's Degree.

### **5.3.1.7 Company before merger groupings of respondents**

The company before merger groupings of respondents are presented in Table 5.7 below.

**Table 5.7: Company before merger groupings of respondents ( $n = 101$ )**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Business Connexion	19	18.8	18.8
Telkom Business/Enterprise	82	81.2	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	

As reflected in Table 5.7, 81% of respondents come from Telkom Business/Enterprise and 19% from Business Connexion.

### **5.3.1.8 Union groupings of respondents**

Union groupings of respondents are presented in Table 5.8 below.

**Table 5.8: Union groupings of respondents ( $n = 101$ )**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
No	68	67.3	67.3
Yes	33	32.7	32.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>	

As reflected in Table 5.8, 33% of respondents belong to a union and 67% are not affiliated to any union.

### **5.3.2 Descriptive statistics of data collected with the before, during and after Merger Questionnaires**

Due to space limitations, frequency distribution scores of the Merger Questionnaire before, during and after the merger are presented in Annexure E. Descriptive statistics of the three elements of the merger questionnaire are presented in the next section. The questionnaire was used to answer research question two:

*Research Question 2: What is the internal stakeholders' level of satisfaction with communication channels used during merger?*

The questionnaire was developed in such a way that it draws answers from respondents about the three phases of the merger process, that is before, during and after the merger. In this study each phase is presented as before, during and after the merger.

#### **5.3.2.1 Distribution statistics of the Before the Merger Sub-Questionnaire**

The mean is a numerical average of a set of numerical values (Pallant, 2016:73). A means score of <3 will indicate that the respondents are dissatisfied with the statement and a means score of 3 and higher will be an indication that the respondent is satisfied with the specific statement

The standard deviation (SD) gives an indication of how far a set of numbers are spread from the mean, where a high *SD* score is an indication of a wide data spread from the mean and a low *SD* score is an indication that the data is closely spread around the mean (Pallant, 2016:72-73).

The respondents were asked to "Think about communication which happened in your former company before merger and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements below using the following scale where (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree." The distribution of the items of the Communication Before the Merger is reflected in Table 5.9 below.

**Table 5.9: Distribution statistics of the items of the Communication Before the Merger (*n* = 101)**

Items	$\bar{x}$	Med	Mod	SD.	Skew	Kurt
11.1: Employees received information about the merger before it could reach the media	3,16	3	4	1,18	-0,35	-0,86
11.2: Communication happened at the time when my views could still influence the situation	<b>2,46</b>	2	2	1,17	0,61	-0,30
11.3: Information shared with me by management was accurate	2,68	3	3	1,13	0,10	-0,79
11.4: Information about the proposed merger was not clear to me [R]	2,62	2	2	1,22	0,49	-0,71
11.5: Internal channels provided ways to get more information	2,81	3	3	1,25	0,05	-1,03
11.6: The implications of the merger were communicated to me	2,68	3	2	1,22	0,27	-0,95
11.7: Most of the staff members were reluctant to accept this merger	<b>4,00</b>	4	5	1,09	-1,24	1,29
11.8: I had a chance to hear many different views of the merger situation	3,12	3	2	1,20	-0,02	-1,06
11.9: The information I received was relevant to me	2,87	3	3	1,02	-0,26	-0,74
11.10: Management assured me that my views will be listened to	<b>2,67</b>	3	2	1,15	0,19	-0,92
11.11: Management abuse their power to make their authority felt [R]	2,88	3	3	1,17	0,08	-0,70
11.12: The way management spoke to me showed considerateness	2,85	3	3	1,06	-0,11	-0,52
11.13: Management gave assurance that any new changes will be communicated to me	3,06	3	4	1,13	-0,33	-0,87
11.14: Communication department advised top management on possible crisis merger not handled well	2,78	3	3	1,14	-0,10	-0,65
<b>Averages</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1.15</b>	<b>-0.1</b>	<b>-0.6</b>

As reflected in Table 5.9, the data collected with Before the Merger Sub-Questionnaire is slightly negatively skewed. The skewness of the items scale is on average -0.13. This is supported by an average mean of 3 and average median mode of 3 for all the items of the scale. The mode for the data set was 3. The negative kurtosis value of -0.63 indicates that the distribution has lighter tails and a flatter peak than the normal distribution. The slight negative skewness of the distribution curve is an indication of a selection of neutral value for the items on average. The average mean result of 3 is an indication that respondents display a neutral stance towards communication satisfaction before the merger.

As reflected in Table 5.9, questions with the highest mean scores are:

Question 11.7: *“Most of the staff members were reluctant to accept this merger”* ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.00).

Question 11.1: *“Employees received information about the merger before it could reach the media”* ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.16).

These high mean values are an indication that respondents agree with statements that information communicated was not clear and that respondents were reluctant to accept this change. This finding is supported by the reviewed literature in Chapter 2 where authors observed the importance and adequacy of employee communication during organisational change in order to ensure that change is embraced rather than resisted (Als 2015; Tubbs & Moss 2008; Belmiro 2000:289). As reflected in Table 5.9, questions with the lowest mean scores are:

Question 11.2: *“Communication happened at the time when my views could still influence the situation”* ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.46).

Question 11.10: *“Management assured me that my views will be listened to”* ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.67).

These low mean values are an indication that the respondents disagree with these statements and they did not have much say to influence the situation. As reflected in Table 5.9, other findings that can be deducted from the data are:

Question 11.3: *“Information shared with me by management was accurate”* ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.68).

Question 11.6: *“The implications of the merger were communicated to me”* ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.68).

Question 11.9: *“The information I received was relevant to me”* ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.87).

Question 11.10: *“Management assured me that my views will be listened to”* ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.67).



Question 11.12: “*The way management spoke to me showed considerateness*” ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.85).

Respondents reported that the information provided by management was not accurate and irrelevant. The implication of the merger was not communicated to employees (See questions 11.3, 11.6 and 11.9). Management did not listen to the views of the employees and did not take the feelings of the employees into consideration (See questions 11.10 and 11.12).

This finding is consistent with stage 2 of Kurt Lewin's change model, which deals with employee involvement during the process of organisational change. When employees are involved during change, they embrace it and support the organisation's quest to achieve the desired outcomes that change is intended to bring (Cummings & Worley 2003).

#### **5.3.2.2 Distribution statistics of the items of the During the Merger Sub-Questionnaire**

Respondents were asked to “Think about communication which happened in the company during merger and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements using the following scale where (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree.” The normal distribution statistics of the Communication During the Merger is reflected in Table 5.10 below.

**Table 5.10: Distribution statistics of Communication During the Merger (*n* = 101)**

Items	$\bar{x}$	Med	Mod	SD.	Skew	Kurt
12.1: I was given an opportunity to air my views during the merger process	2,44	2	2	1,11	0,41	-0,74
12.2: Communication did not address cultural differences [R]	2.28	2	2	1,06	0,63	-0,047
12.3: I was afforded the opportunity to have further conversations with management after presentations	2,59	2	2	1,13	0,27	-0,89
12.4: Internal communication channels provided regular updates to ensure that I have access to the latest information at all times	2,76	3	2	1,16	0,16	-0,84
12.5: The implications of the merger were communicated to me	2,65	3	2	1,09	0,12	-0,89
12.6: Research was regularly conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication	<b>2,31</b>	2	2	1,07	0,64	-0,14
12.7: Information communicated by management during the merger process was not consistent	<b>3,66</b>	4	4	1,06	-0,82	0,23
12.8: Communication with my co-workers was reflective of what was happening at that time	3,53	4	4	1,03	-0,72	-0,09
12.9: Management took accountability for the communication messages shared during the merger	2,71	3	2	1,04	0,28	-0,48
12.10: Management was aware of what employees should know about the merger	2,91	3	3	1,11	-0,09	-0,81
12.11: Customers and other stakeholders had a favourable response to the merger	<b>2,14</b>	2	1	1,04	0,70	0,03
<b>Averages</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.43</b>

Questions 12.2 and 12.7 was not reverse questions as participants strongly agree – see the “not” word in the question and Appendix E

As reflected in Table 5.10, the data collected with the During the Merger Sub-Questionnaire is slightly positively skewed. The skewness of the items of the scale is on average 0.03. This is supported by an average mean of 3 and average median of 3 for all the items of the scale. The mode for the data set was 2. The positive kurtosis of 0.43 indicates that the distribution has heavier tails and a higher peak than the normal distribution. The slight positive skewness of the distribution curve is an indication of a selection of less than neutral value for the items on average.

The average mean result of 3 is an indication that respondents display a slightly neutral stance towards communication satisfaction during the merger. As reflected in Table 5.10 questions with the highest mean scores are:

Question 12.2: "*Communication did not address cultural differences*" ( $\bar{x} = 3.71$ ).

Question 12.7: "*Information communicated by management during the merger process was not consistent*" ( $\bar{x} = 3.66$ ).

These high mean values are an indication that most of the respondents agree with these statements that information communicated was not consistent and did not address cultural differences between the two merging organisations.

This finding is supported by literature which indicate that cultural differences play a significant role in the process of organisational change (Mickelson & Worley 2003). When cultural differences are ignored during the merger process, it may result in negative outcomes such as top management turnover, knowledge transfer resistance, decline in sales revenue and a possible inter-organisational conflict (Vaara 2003; Birkinshaw, Bresman & Hakanson 2000). As reflected in Table 5.10 questions with the lowest mean scores are:

Question 12.11: "*Customers and other stakeholders had a favourable response to the merger*" ( $\bar{x} = 2.14$ ).

Question 12.6: "*Research was regularly conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication*" ( $\bar{x} = 2.31$ ).

These low mean values are an indication that respondents disagree with these statements and that customers did not respond favourably to the merger as it influenced their business operations. The effectiveness of the communication process was not monitored during the merger. This finding is consistent with what authors agree with that effective internal communication creates trust between employees and management (Pham 2014; Smith 2005). As reflected in Table 5.10 other findings that can derive from the data are:

Question 12.1: *“I was given an opportunity to air my views during the merger process”* ( $\bar{x} = 2.44$ ).

Question 12.4: *“Internal communication channels provided regular updates to ensure that I have access to the latest information at all times”* ( $\bar{x} = 2.76$ ).

Question 12.5: *“The implications of the merger were communicated to me”* ( $\bar{x} = 2.65$ ).

Question 12.9: *“Management took accountability for the communication messages shared during the merger”* ( $\bar{x} = 2.71$ ).

The implication of the merger was not communicated and that employees were not given an opportunity to air their views and the communication channels were not effective (See questions 12.1, 12.4 and 12.5).

### **5.3.2.3 Distribution statistics of the items of the After the Merger Sub-Questionnaire**

Respondents were asked to “Think about communication which happened in your former company after the merger and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements below using the following scale where (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree. The distribution statistics of the Communication After the Merger is reflected in Table 5.11 below.

**Table 5.11: Distribution statistics of the Communication After the Merger (n = 101)**

Items	Mean	Med	Mod	SD	Skew	Kurt
13.1: Management reported back on the outcome of the merger	3,07	3	4	1,18	-0,40	-0,99
13.2: Information shared after the merger seemed consistent with the one shared before the merger	<b>2,35</b>	2	2	1,01	0,43	-0,42
13.3: Communication is no longer transparent after merger	3,37	4	4	1,18	-0,27	-0,90
13.4: Management asked me how I feel about the new company	<b>2,32</b>	2	2	1,07	0,54	-0,37
13.5: I identify with the new company	2,76	3	3	1,12	-0,08	-0,73
13.6: The branding of the merged company was appealing me	2,88	3	3	1,19	-0,05	-0,80
13.7: Employees are committed to being part of the new company	2,78	3	3	1,20	0,08	-0,87
13.8: Management motivated staff members to achieve the objectives of the merged company	3,12	3	4	1,21	-0,37	-0,97
13.9: Internal communication channels were still accessible after the merger	2,81	3	3	1,07	-0,06	-0,76
13.10: Work instructions are clarified to enable me to do my work	2,72	3	2	1,23	0,16	-1,11
13.11: The manner in which the merger was communicated improved my relationship with the new colleagues	2,52	2	2	1,08	0,51	-0,20
13.12: Communication covered the long-term strategy of the new company	2,78	3	3	1,07	0,15	-0,54
13.13: The new company has ability to accomplish what it says it will do	2,95	3	3	1,07	-0,10	-0,46
13.14: I believe nothing of value has been accomplished with merging these companies	<b>3,41</b>	3	3	1,12	-0,21	-0,67
13.15: The former companies were merged without undermining what they can offer	3,02	3	3	1,15	0,04	-0,54
13.16: The way the merger was communicated enables me to have an open communication with top management	2,58	3	2	1,10	0,15	-0,85
13.17: The new company structure has negatively affected the way I work	3,25	3	3	1,27	-0,12	-1,08
13.18: The new company structure makes reporting easy	2,66	3	3	1,12	0,04	-0,64
13.19: There is fairness in allocation of financial resources in the departments of merged company	2,53	3	3	1,08	0,39	-0,21
13.20: Employee communication is an important part of my company's communication function	<b>3,52</b>	4	4	1,19	-0,64	-0,31
13.21: Communication among employees at different levels is encouraged	3,25	3	4	1,18	-0,42	-0,62
<b>Average</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1.14</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>-0.67</b>

As reflected in Table 5.11, the data collected with After the Merger Sub-Questionnaire is slightly negatively skewed. The skewness of the items scale is on average -0.67. This is supported by an average mean of 3 and average mode of 3 for all the items of the scale. The median for the data set was 3. The negative kurtosis value of -0.01 indicates that the distribution has lighter tails and a flatter peak than the normal distribution. The slight negative skewness of the distribution curve is an indication of a selection of neutral value for the items on average. The average mean result of 3 is an indication that respondents display a neutral stance towards communication satisfaction after the merger. As reflected in Table 5.11 questions with the highest mean scores are:

Question 13.20: *“Employee communication is an important part of my company’s communication function”* ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ).

Question 13.14: *“I believe nothing of value has been accomplished with merging these companies”* ( $\bar{x} = 3.41$ ).

These high mean values are an indication that respondents agree with these statements that communication is important during a merger. Respondents believe that the merger was not successful from their point of view. This finding is consistent with literature which argues that effective communication is critical for the success of the merger (Deresky 2000; Brown & Cregan 2008). As reflected in Table 5.11, questions with the lowest mean scores are:

Question 13.4: *“Management asked me how I feel about the new company”* ( $\bar{x} = 2.32$ ).

Question 13.2: *“Information shared after the merger seemed consistent with the those shared before the merger”* ( $\bar{x} = 2.35$ ).

These low mean values are an indication that respondents disagree with these statements and that management did not ask respondents how they feel about the merger and the information shared was not consistent after the merger. The researcher found this finding affirming what other authors are stating, that employee communication must be consistent during the process of organisational change

(Akingbola, Rogers & Baluch 2019). As reflected in Table 5.11 other findings that can be derived from this question results are:

Question 13.5: *"I identify with the new company"* ( $\bar{x} = 2.76$ ).

Question 13.7: *"Employees are committed to being part of the new company"* ( $\bar{x} = 2.78$ ).

Question 13.9: *"Internal communication channels were still accessible after the merger"* ( $\bar{x} = 2.81$ ).

Question 13.12: *"Communication covered the long-term strategy of the new company"* ( $\bar{x} = 2.78$ ).

Question 13.18: *"The new company structure makes reporting easy"* ( $\bar{x} = 2.66$ ).

Question 13.19: *"Employee communication is an important part of my company's communication function"* ( $\bar{x} = 2.53$ ).

It is evident that employees do not identify with the new company and are not committed to it (See Question 13.5 and 13.7). Communication is still a problem after the merger and the long-term strategy of the organisation is not clear, there are reporting structure problems and resource allocation is not fair (See Question 13.9, 13.12, 13.18 and 13.19).

### **5.3.3 Factor analysis of the before, during and after Merger Sub-Questionnaires**

The primary purpose of a factor analysis is to take a large set of variables and reduce them to a smaller set of factors to form coherent subscales (Pallant 2016). An exploratory factor analysis was conducted as the scales used were adapted from other sources. The factor analysis conducted on the before during and after merger questions of the Questionnaire is presented next.

### **5.3.3.1 Factor analysis of the Before the Merger Sub-Questionnaire**

The suitability of the inter-correlation matrix of the Before the Merger Sub-Questionnaire for factor analysis was confirmed with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), which measured .868 i.e. above the recommended value of .6 (Hair et al 1998). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Chi-square value was statistically significant ( $\chi^2$  (91) = 551,246;  $p \leq .000$ ), therefore indicating the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis (see Table F.1 in Annexure F for item inter-correlation matrix).

*Four factors* were postulated according to Kaiser's (1970) criterion, which explained about 65% of the variance in the factor space (see Table G.1, Annexure G). The factor matrix is presented in Table G.2 (see Annexure G). Based on unacceptable Cronbach Alpha results of the iterative reliability analysis conducted on the extracted four Factors out of the Before the Merger Sub-Questionnaire Questions (see Tables G.3 to G.5, Annexure G) it was decided to reject the results of the factor analysis and use the measure as is. An Iterative Reliability Analysis was conducted on all the items of the Before the Merger Sub-Questionnaire. The result of the reliability analysis is reported under section 5.3.4.1 below.

### **5.3.3.2 Factor analysis of During the Merger Sub-Questionnaire**

Suitability of the inter-correlation matrix of the During the Merger Sub-Questionnaire for factor analysis was confirmed with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), which measured .866 i.e. above the recommended value of .6 (Hair et al 1998). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Chi-square value was statistically significant ( $\chi^2$  (55) = 491.071;  $p \leq .000$ ), therefore indicating the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis.

*Two factors* were postulated according to Kaiser's (1970) criterion, which explained about 59% of the variance in the factor space (see Table H.1, Annexure H). The factor matrix is presented in Table H.2 (see Annexure H). Based on the unacceptable Cronbach Alpha results of the iterative reliability analysis conducted on the extracted two Factors (See Annexure H: Table H.3), they were dropped from further analysis. The result of the reliability analysis for Factor One is reported under section 5.3.4.2 below.



### **5.3.3.3 Factor analysis of After the Merger Sub-Questionnaire**

Suitability of the inter-correlation matrix of the After the Merger Sub-Questionnaire for factor analysis was confirmed with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), which measured .895 i.e. above the recommended value of .6 (Hair et al 1998). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Chi-square value was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 (210) = 1175.470$ ;  $p \leq .000$ ), therefore indicating the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis.

Three factors were postulated according to Kaiser's (1970) criterion, which explained about 57% of the variance in the factor space (see Table I.1, Annexure I). The factor matrix is presented in Table I.2 (see Annexure I). The result of the reliability analysis is presented in section 5.3.4.3.

### **5.3.4 Iterative reliability analysis of extracted factors**

The iterative reliability analysis that was conducted on extracted factors of the before, during and after Merger Sub-Questionnaires with the view to determine acceptable internal consistency reliability (DeCoster, & Claypool 2004; Pallant 2016) are presented. Only extracted factors that yielded acceptable Cronbach Alpha results are presented in this section due to space constraints. The results of extracted factors with unacceptable Cronbach Alpha results will be reported in the annexures.

#### **5.3.4.1 Iterative reliability analysis of Before the Merger Sub-Questionnaire extracted factors**

Based on unacceptable Cronbach Alpha results of the iterative reliability analysis conducted on extracted four Factors out of the Before the Merger Sub-Questionnaire Questions (see Tables G.3 to G.5, Annexure G), it was decided to reject the results of the factor analysis and use the measure as is. For the purpose of this study the Before the Merger Sub-Questionnaire will be named Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction. The results of the iterative reliability analysis conducted on the different items of the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale are reflected in Table 5.12 below.

**Table 5.12: Iterative reliability analysis of Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale**

Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
11.1: Employees received information about the merger before it could reach the media	25,208	53,946	,530	,378	,877
11.2: Communication happened at the time when my views could still influence the situation	25,911	53,722	,550	,366	,875
11.3: Information shared with me by management was accurate	25,683	52,379	,665	,476	,867
11.5: Internal channels provided ways to get more information	25,554	49,650	,759	,614	,859
11.6: The implications of the merger was communicated to me	25,683	51,439	,660	,514	,867
11.8: I had a chance to hear many different views of the merger situation	25,248	57,208	,323	,286	,892
11.9: The information I received was relevant to me	25,495	53,072	,704	,569	,865
11.10: Management assured me that my views will be listened to	25,693	52,895	,617	,451	,870
11.12: The way management spoke to me showed considerateness	25,515	52,092	,738	,641	,862
11.13: Management gave assurance that any new changes will be communicated to me	25,307	53,175	,612	,573	,871
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Std.</b>	<b>No of Items</b>
<b>.88</b>		28.36	64.53	8.03	10

The Cronbach Alpha of the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale improved to its current Cronbach Alpha value of .88 by deleting four of the items from the scale as a result of the iterative reliability analysis namely questions 11.4, 11.7, 11.11 and 11.14. The questions were omitted from any further data analysis in the study.

The result obtained from the iterative reliability analysis of the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale (measured by ten items) yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .88, indicating an acceptable internal consistency reliability (DeCoster & Claypool 2004; Pallant 2016). This means the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction scale is reliable.

#### ***5.3.4.2 Iterative Reliability analysis of During the Merger Sub-Questionnaire extracted factors***

Two factors were postulated according to Kaiser's (1970) criterion, which explained about 59% of the variance in the factor space (see Table H.1, Annexure H). The factor matrix is presented in Table H.2 (see Annexure H).

*Factor Two:* The result obtained from the iterative reliability analysis of the second factor extracted from the During the Merger Sub-Questionnaire yielded un-acceptable internal consistency reliability Cronbach's Alpha score of -1.23. This scale was rejected from use in further data analysis in the study (See Annexure H: Table H3).

*Factor one:* For the purpose of this study the During the Merger Sub-Questionnaire the one factor extracted will be named During the Merger Communication Satisfaction. The results of the iterative reliability analysis conducted on the different items of the During the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale are reflected in Table 5.13 below.

**Table 5.13: Iterative Reliability analysis of During the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
12.1: I was given an opportunity to air my views during the merger process	18,079	36,214	,563	,419	,897
12.3: I was afforded the opportunity to have further conversations with management after presentations	17,921	34,394	,698	,551	,884
12.4: Internal communication channels provided regular updates to ensure that I have access to the latest information at all times	17,752	33,468	,756	,606	,879
12.5: The implications of the merger was communicated to me	17,861	34,541	,720	,534	,882
12.6: Research was regularly conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication.	18,208	34,606	,727	,564	,882
12.9: Management took accountability for the communication messages shared during the merger	17,802	35,080	,711	,607	,883
12.10: Management was aware of what employees should know about the merger	17,604	35,322	,633	,530	,890
12.11: Customers and other stakeholders had a favourable response to the merger	18,376	35,697	,658	,492	,888
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>,899</b>		<b>20,515</b>	<b>44,952</b>	<b>6,7046</b>	<b>8</b>

The result obtained from the iterative reliability analysis of the During the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale (measured by eight items) yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .89, indicating an acceptable internal consistency reliability (DeCoster & Claypool 2004; Pallant 2016). This means the During the Merger Communication Satisfaction scale is reliable.

#### **5.3.4.3 Iterative Reliability analysis of After the Merger Sub-Questionnaire Extracted Factors**

The After the Merger Questionnaire structure (21 items) were investigated with a general factor analysis, a statistical method that estimates the amount of variance due to common factors that is shared between a set of variables (Pallant 2016). *Three factors* were extracted (See Annexure I), where Factor 1 and Factor 3 yielded acceptable Cronbach Alpha results. Factor 2 with a Cronbach Alpha of .46, indicating unacceptable internal consistency reliability (DeCoster & Claypool, 2004; Pallant, 2016). This scale was excluded from further statistical calculations.

*Factor One:* For the purpose of this study the extracted Factor 1 will be named “After the Merger Communication Satisfaction”. The results for the Reliability analysis of the After the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale are reflected in Table 5.15 below.

**Table 5.14: Iterative Reliability Analysis of After the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
13.1: Management reported back on the outcome of the merger	22,683	42,279	,729	,648	,875
13.2: Information shared after the merger seemed consistent with the one shared before the merger	23,406	44,204	,712	,631	,877
13.4: Management asked me how I feel about the new company	23,436	45,448	,573	,390	,887
13.8: Management motivated staff members to achieve the objectives of the merged company	22,634	43,534	,615	,452	,885
13.9: Internal communication channels were still accessible after the merger	22,941	43,356	,729	,571	,876
13.12: Communication covered the long-term strategy of the new company	22,970	44,389	,649	,452	,882
13.19: There is fairness in allocation of financial resources in the departments of merged company	23,218	45,072	,591	,398	,886
13.20: Employee communication is an important part of my company's communication function	22,228	44,918	,534	,366	,891
13.21: Communication among employees at different levels is encouraged	22,505	41,892	,757	,633	,873
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Std.</b>	<b>No of Items</b>
<b>.89</b>		25.75	54.82	7.41	9

The results obtained from the iterative reliability analysis of the After the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale (measured by nine items) yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .89, indicating acceptable internal consistency reliability (De Coster 2004; Pallant 2016). This means the After the Merger Communication Satisfaction scale is reliable.

*Factor Three:* For the purpose of this study the extracted Factor 3 will be named “Organisational identification (OI) scale”. The results of the Reliability analysis of Organisational identification (OI) scale are reflected in Table 5.15 below.

**Table 5.15: Iterative Reliability Analysis: Organisational Identification Scale**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
13.5: I identify with the new company	19,109	39,038	,690	,527	,893
13.6: The branding of the merged company was appealing me	18,990	37,850	,729	,561	,890
13.7: Employees are committed to being part of the new company	19,089	38,322	,691	,501	,893
13.10: Work instructions are clarified to enable me to do my work	19,149	38,588	,645	,445	,898
13.11: The manner in which the merger was communicated improved my relationship with the new colleagues	19,347	40,169	,631	,465	,898
13.13: The new company has ability to accomplish what it says it will do	18,921	38,834	,750	,590	,888
13.16: The way the merger was communicated enables me to have an open communication with top management	19,287	38,927	,720	,580	,891
13.18: The new company structure makes reporting easy	19,208	38,646	,728	,590	,890
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Std.</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>.91</b>		21.87	49.99	7.07	8

The result obtained from the iterative reliability analysis of Organisational identification (OI) scale (measured by eight items) yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .91, indicating an acceptable internal consistency reliability (De Coster 2004; Pallant 2016). This means the Organisational identification (OI) scale is reliable.

### 5.3.5 Test for normality

Kolmogorov-Smirnova Normality test was conducted to determine if the data collected through the sample was drawn from a normally distributed population. The reason is that this is a requirement of some of the statistical test for example two-way ANOVA (Pallant 2016).

**Table 5.16: The Communication Satisfaction Sub-scales tests of normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Before Merger Customer satisfaction	,258	101	,000	,860	101	,000
During Merger Customer satisfaction	,205	101	,000	,899	101	,000
After the Merger Customer satisfaction	,254	101	,000	,888	101	,000
Organisational Identification	,234	101	,000	,897	101	,000

*a. Lilliefors Significance Correction*

As reflected in Table 5.16 above the significant result for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (*Sig.* = 0.00) for all the sub-scales suggest a violation of the assumption of normality. Based on this finding non-Parametric statistical calculations were used for inferential statistics for the study (Pallant 2016).

### 5.3.6 Quantitative inferential statistics for the study

Inferential statistical calculations were conducted on the data collected for the study with the intention to make inferences about the company's population based on the sample (Leedy & Ormrod 2015). The results from inferential statistical analysis are presented next.



### 5.3.6.1 Inter-correlations between sub-scales

A correlation between two variables indicates that when one variable changes in value the other variable tends to change in a specific direction. Understanding the relationship between two variables is useful as the value of one variable can be used to predict the other. The value of the effect size of Pearson ( $r$ ) correlation varies between -1 (a perfect negative correlation) to +1 (a perfect positive correlation). When the distribution is positive skew, then most values are clustered at the left tail of the distribution (low values). When the distribution is negative skew values are clustered at the right tail of the distribution, high values. Pallant, (2016:132).

Spearman correlations were conducted to measure the strength of association and direction between the four variables of this study. According to (Ratner 2003), the strength of association or correlations ranging between values of  $r(N) = .1$  and  $.3$  pose a small effect,  $r(N) > .3$  to  $.5$  pose a moderate effect and those greater than  $r(N) < .5$  pose a large effect size (Cohen 1988). Spearman Correlations calculation results are reflected in Table 5.17 below.

**Table 5.17: Inter-correlations matrix (Spearman Correlations) of the the four variables ( $n = 101$ )**

	Before Merger Customer satisfaction	During Merger Customer satisfaction	After the Merger Customer satisfaction	Organisation al Identification
Before Merger Customer satisfaction	1,000			
During Merger Customer satisfaction	.738**	1,000		
After the Merger Customer satisfaction	.637**	.692**	1,000	
Organisational Identification	.550**	.609**	.717**	1,000

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

As reflected in Table 5.17 above, the following correlations can be reported.

There is a strong significant positive relationship between the Before Merger Customer satisfaction with During Merger Customer satisfaction as perceived by employees ( $r(n = 101; p < 0.01) = 0.74$ ).

There is strong significant positive relationship between the Before Merger Customer satisfaction and After the Merger Customer satisfaction namely ( $r(n = 101; p < 0.01) = 0.64$ ).

There is strong significant positive relationship between the Before Merger Customer satisfaction and Organisational Identification ( $r(n = 101; p < 0.01) = 0.55$ ).

There is strong significant positive relationship between During Merger Customer satisfaction and After the Merger Customer ( $r(n = 101; p < 0.01) = 0.69$ ).

There is strong significant positive relationship between During Merger Customer satisfaction and Organisational Identification ( $r(n = 101; p < 0.01) = 0.71$ ).

There is strong significant positive relationship between After the Merger Customer and Organisational Identification ( $r(n = 101; p < 0.01) = 0.61$ ).

The direction of association between the four variables is positive, this means if there is an improvement in the score of one the scales, others will improve and vice versa. The level of communication satisfaction will have an impact on the levels of organisation identification.

#### **5.3.6.2 Variable mean score comparisons**

To determine if there are significant differences in the median scores of the four continuous independent variables Before Merger Communication Satisfaction (BMCS), During Merger Communication Satisfaction (DMCS), After Merger Communication Satisfaction (AMCS) and After Merger Organisational Identification (AMOI) across the categorical independent biographical and demographical variables groups, non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test, and Kruskal–Wallis Test were conducted. The Mean rank gives an indication which one of the groups have the highest overall ranking that corresponds to the highest scores on the continuous independent variable (Pallant 2016).

### 5.3.6.3 Company before the merger

Before the merger between the two companies, respondents in this study were members of Telkom Business/Enterprise or Business Connexion (see paragraph 5.4.1). The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted.

BMCS: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test show there is no statistically significant difference in employee BMCS of the company groups where Telkom Business/Enterprise (*Mean rank* = 48.73,  $n = 82$ ) and Business Connexion (*Mean rank* = 60.79,  $n = 19$ ) with ( $U = 593.000$ ,  $z = -1.764$ ,  $p = 0.078$ ). The median score for Telkom Business/Enterprise is the same (3) than those of the Business Connexion (3).

DMCS: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there is a *statistically significant difference* in employee DMCS of the company groups where Telkom Business/Enterprise (*Mean rank* = 47.23,  $n = 82$ ) and Business Connexion (*Mean rank* = 67.29,  $n = 19$ ) with ( $U = 469.500$ ,  $z = -2.892$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). The median score for Telkom Business/Enterprise is higher (3) than those of the Business Connexion (2).

AMCS: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there is a *statistically significant difference* in employee AMCS of the company groups where Telkom Business/Enterprise (*Mean rank* = 47.24,  $n = 82$ ) and Business Connexion (*Mean rank* = 67.21,  $n = 19$ ), with ( $U = 471.000$ ,  $z = -2.865$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). The median score for Telkom Business/Enterprise is the same (3) than those of the Business Connexion (3).

AMOI: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there is a *statistically significant difference* in employee AMOI of company groups where Telkom Business/Enterprise (*Mean rank* = 47.21,  $n = 82$ ) and Business Connexion (*Mean rank* = 67.34,  $n = 19$ ) with ( $U = 468.500$ ,  $z = -2.866$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ). The median score for Telkom Business/Enterprise is the same (3) than those of the Business Connexion (3).

*Finding:* Respondents that previously belonged to Business Connexion submitted significant higher mean rank DMCS, AMCS and AMOI scores than those that come from Telkom Business/Enterprise. A possible explanation for these high scores from Business Connexion participants could be that they were not that much affected by

the merger. Respondents from Telkom Business/Enterprise were the ones who were mostly affected because they were transferred as a result of the merger.

#### **5.3.6.4 Gender groupings**

Respondents were divided in the two gender groups namely males and females (see section 5.3.1.1).

BMCS: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there no statistically significant difference in employee BMCS gender groups where females (*Mean rank* = 52.67,  $n = 35$ ) and males (*Mean rank* = 50.11,  $n = 66$ ), with ( $U = 1096.500$ ,  $z = -0.456$ ,  $p = -0.649$ ).

DMCS: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in employee DMCS gender groups where females (*Mean rank* = 52.73,  $n = 35$ ) and males (*Mean rank* = 50.08,  $n = 66$ ), with ( $U = 1094.500$ ,  $z = -0.464$ ,  $p = 0.643$ ).

AMCS: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there no statistically significant difference in employee AMCS gender groups where females (*Mean rank* = 51.36,  $n = 35$ ) and males (*Mean rank* = 50.81,  $n = 66$ ), with ( $U = 1142.500$ ,  $z = -0.095$ ,  $p = 0.924$ ).

AMOI: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in employee AMOI gender groups where females (*Mean rank* = 47.89,  $n = 35$ ) and males (*Mean rank* = 52.65,  $n = 66$ ), with ( $U = 1046.00$ ,  $z = -0.826$ ,  $p = 0.409$ ).

*Finding:* Based on the results of the Mann-Whitney U Test, is clear that in this study gender does not play a role in how respondents perceived employee communication before, during and after a merger. This finding does not support reviewed literature which states that gender has an impact on communication because males and females perceive communication differently (Popp, Donovan, Crawford, Marsh & Peele 2003). The reason for this may be that respondents were reluctant to express their views as they chose the neutral option.

### 5.3.6.5 Union membership

Respondents were divided into two groups namely union and non-union members (see section 5.3.19).

BMCS: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in employee BMCS union membership groups where union members (*Mean rank* = 46.50,  $n = 33$ ) and non-union members (*Mean rank* = 53.18,  $n = 68$ ), with ( $U = 973.5$ ,  $z = -1.173$ ,  $p = 0.24$ ). The mean score for union member is the same (3) than those of the non-union members (3).

DMCS: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in employee DMCS union membership groups where union members (*Mean rank* = 44.97,  $n = 33$ ) and non-union members (*Mean rank* = 53.93,  $n = 68$ ), with ( $U = 923.00$ ,  $z = -1.549$ ,  $p = 0.121$ ). The mean score for union members is higher (3) than those of the non-union members (2).

AMCS: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there is a *statistically significant difference* in employee DMCS of union membership groups where union members (*Mean rank* = 41.44,  $n = 33$ ) and non-union members (*Mean rank* = 55.64,  $n = 68$ ), with ( $U = 806.50$ ,  $z = -2.445$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ). The mean score for union members is the same (3) than those of the non-union members (3). The mean rank score for union members is the lower (41.44) than those of the non-union members (55.64).

AMOI: The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in employee DMCS of union membership groups where union members (*Mean rank* = 43.89,  $n = 33$ ) and non-union members (*Mean rank* = 54.45,  $n = 68$ ), with ( $U = 887.50$ ,  $z = -1.804$ ,  $p = 0.071$ ). The mean score for union members is the same (3) than those of the non-union members (3).

*Finding:* Based on this data, the After-Merger Communication Satisfaction of union members is lower than that of non-union members. This implies that union membership has an impact on communication satisfaction.

#### **5.3.6.6 Age groupings**

The respondents were divided into seven age groupings (refer to section 5.3.1.2).

BMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in BMCS levels of respondents across seven different age groups,  $\chi^2 (6, n = 101) = 6.387, p = .38$ .

DMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in DMCS levels of respondents across seven different age groups,  $\chi^2 (6, n = 101) = 6.369, p = .38$ .

AMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in AMCS levels of respondents across seven different age groups,  $\chi^2 (6, n = 101) = 11.980, p = .062$ .

AMOI: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in AMOI levels of respondents across seven different age groups,  $\chi^2 (6, n = 101) = 5.869, p = .438$ .

Finding: Based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test is clear that age does not play a role in how respondents perceived communication satisfaction before, during and after the merger. This finding contradicts assertions by other authors that demographic factors such as age play a significant role in communication during the process of organisational change (Twenge & Campbell 2008; Hindi, Miller & Catt 2004:14; Tsui, Porter & Egan 2002).

#### **5.3.6.7 Race groupings**

Respondents were divided into four race groupings (refer to section 5.3.1.3).

BMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in BMCS levels of respondents across four different race groups,  $\chi^2 (3, n = 101) = 3.339, p = .34$ .

DMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in DMCS levels of respondents across four different race groups,  $\chi^2 (3, n = 101) = 2.833, p = .42$ .

AMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in AMCS levels of respondents across four different race groups,  $\chi^2 (3, n = 101) = 3.128, p = .37$ .

AMOI: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in AMOI levels of respondents across four different race groups,  $\chi^2 (3, n = 101) = .2.240, p = .52$ .

*Finding:* Based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test it is clear that race does not play a role in how respondents perceived communication satisfaction before, during and after the merger. This finding is inconsistent with the view that race plays a role on how individuals perceive communication (Flick 2009; Jensen 2008:9).

#### **5.3.6.8 Job level groupings**

Respondents were divided into four job level groups (refer to section 5.3.1.4).

BMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in BMCS levels of respondents across four different job level groups,  $\chi^2 (4, n = 101) = 0.147, p = .70$ .

DMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in DMCS levels of respondents across four different job level groups,  $\chi^2 (4, n = 101) = 0.668, p = .41$ .

AMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in AMCS levels of respondents across four different job level groups,  $\chi^2 (4, n = 101) = 0.242, p = .62$ .

AMOI: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in AMOI levels of respondents across four different job level groups,  $\chi^2 (4, n = 101) = 0.068, p = .80$ .

*Finding:* Based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test is clear that job level does not play a role in how the respondents perceived communication satisfaction before, during and after a merger.

### 5.3.6.9 Years of experience groupings

Respondents were divided into four years of experience groups (refer to section 5.3.1.5).

BMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in BMCS levels of respondents across four different years of experience groups,  $X^2 (3, n = 101) = 1.408, p = .70$ .

DMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there *is a statistically significant difference* in DMCS levels of participants across four different years of experience groups,  $X^2 (3, n = 101) = 10.754, p = .013$ . The years of experience group 0-10 years ( $n = 18$ ; *median* = 3; *mean rank* =64.53) submitted the highest scores followed by the years of experience group 11-20 years ( $n = 31$ ; *median* = 3; *mean rank* =55.94). Respondents in the years of experience group 21-30 years ( $n = 30$ ; *median* = 2; *mean rank* =39.78) submitted the lowest scores followed by those in the years of experience group 31-40 years ( $n = 22$ ; *median* = 2.5; *mean rank* =48.27).

*Finding:* Based on this data, respondents with lower years of experience reported higher communication satisfaction scores during the merger than those with more experience. Respondents with 31-40 years of experience are closer to pension and can possibly leave the organisation. Respondents with 21-30 years of experience have a job security challenge, should they be retrenched they will have to find alternative employment, which could be a challenge.

AMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in AMCS levels of respondents across four different years of experience groups,  $X^2 (3, n = 101) = 6.007, p = .11$ .

AMOI: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test show there is no statistically significant difference in AMOI levels of respondents across four different years of experience groups,  $X^2 (3, n = 101) = 3.375, p = .34$ .

*Finding:* Based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test, it is clear that years of experience do play a role in how participants perceived communication satisfaction before, during and after a merger.



#### **5.3.6.10 Highest qualification groupings**

Respondents were divided into four highest qualification groups (refer to section 5.3.1.6).

BMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in BMCS levels of respondents across four different highest qualification groups,  $X^2 (3, n = 101) = 0.854, p = .84$ .

DMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in DMCS levels of respondents across four different highest qualification groups,  $X^2 (3, n = 101) = 0.521, p = .91$ .

AMCS: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is not statistically significant difference in AMCS levels of respondents across four different highest qualification groups,  $X^2 (3, n = 101) = 0.950, p = .81$ .

AMOI: The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Test shows there is no statistically significant difference in AMOI levels of respondents across four different highest qualification groups,  $X^2 (3, n = 101) = 0.348, p = .95$ .

*Finding:* Based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test it is clear that qualification does not play a role in how respondents perceived communication satisfaction before, during and after a merger. This is inconsistent with literature, which indicates that individuals with different qualifications will perceive communication satisfaction in a different way based on their academic knowledge and understanding (Hiremath 2006).

#### **5.3.7 Quantitative research conclusion**

Quantitative data suggests that employees were not satisfied with communication during the three phases of the merger process; before, during and after. Factors such as communication channels, management communication and message consistency contributed to levels of dissatisfaction among employees.

## 5.4 Presentation of qualitative results

Face to face semi-structured interviews were conducted with six participants with the view to find supporting information in order to provide answers to the research questions of this study. The data collected with interviews was analysed using a thematic analysis method.

### 5.4.1 Biographical and demographical data of interview participants

Biographical information of 6 employees who participated in semi-structured interviews is presented in Table 5.18 below.

**Table 5.18 Biographical and demographical data of participants**

Occupation	Race		Gender		Age		Years of experience	
Senior Specialist – Partner Management	Indian	1	Male	1	40-45 years	1	23 years	1
Senior Specialist – Partner Management	Black	1	Male	1	40-45 years	1	21 years	1
Senior Service Integration Manager	Black	1	Male	1	45-50 years	1	18 years	1
Specialist – Technical Solutions (Telecommunications)	Black	1	Male	1	35-40 years	1	21 years	1
Manager – Commercial	Black	1	Female	1	50-55 years	1	23 years	1
Specialist – Product Management	Black	1	Female	1	40-45 years	1	17 years	1

As reflected in Table 5.18, most of employees who participated in interviews held senior positions within the organisation with 17 to 23 years of experience. Although the organisation has a diverse demographical race profile, five of the six participants who were available for interviews were black and one was Indian. Four participants were male and two were female, with ages ranging from 40 to 51 years.

#### **5.4.2 Thematic analysis of qualitative data**

Effective communication during a merger is critical as it is one of the primary reasons why mergers fail (Risberg 2013:144; Aguilera & Dencker 2004). The researcher found no study that addresses employee communication during the three phases of the merger process; before, during and after the merger, therefore this study provided an opportunity to add to the existing knowledge on the subject.

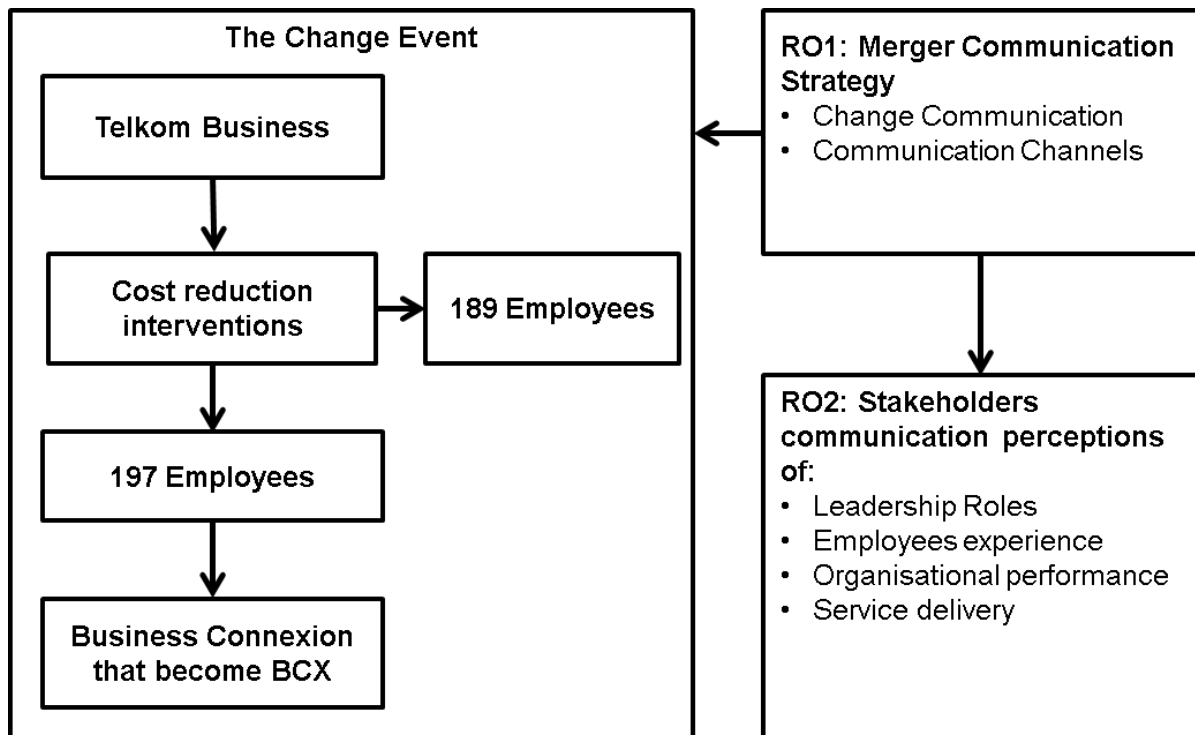
The intention with interviews was to develop an understanding of how employees experienced communication during the merger between Telkom Business/Enterprise and Business Connexion. The aim was to respond to the following research objectives as stated in Chapter 1.

**RO 1:** To explore the communication strategy that was used during the merger.

**RO 3:** To explore the stakeholders' perspective of communication during the merger.

A six-step thematic analysis method as described in section 4.7.1.1, Chapter 4. was used to determine patterns or relationships within the data collected from interviews.

Transcribed data from the interviews was coded and grouped into themes. From these themes a thematic map was created as reflected in Figure 5.1 below.



**Figure 5.1: Thematic Analysis of the merger communication strategy and perceived stakeholders' perceptions**

This thematic mind map as reflected in Figure 5.1 above forms the framework of this discussion. The first of the three main themes provides a background to the study and the other two provide answers to the research questions. Below is a discussion on the main themes with their related sub-themes.

#### **5.4.3 Theme: The change event**

Participants were asked the following question to assess how they perceived the change event *"The organisation recently went through a process of change, organisational change in the form of a merger, what is your take on that?"* Two sub-themes were identified from the data to describe the change event namely organisational differences and cost reduction interventions.

##### **5.4.3.1 Sub-theme: Organisational differences**

The purpose of this theme is to provide a background from participants' point of view on how they viewed the two organisations during the merger as presented in Table 5.19 below.

**Table 5.19: Participants view of the two merged organisations**

Sub- Theme	Emerging Theme
Different cultures	Organisational differences
Different operation models	
Different systems	
Duplications in systems	
Different Customer base	

The culture of an organisation can be explained as the personality an organisation has. It is an invisible force that influence and guide behaviour of employees and has an impact on their work performance (Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey & Saks 2015). The two organisations each had a distinctive culture on how things get done. The challenge was to integrate these two cultures into a new culture. The challenge is highlighted with the following statement.

*“Would have been a choice, whether you want to keep the Telkom enterprise culture, or you want to utilize the Business Connexion culture going forward, or you wish to merge the two” (Participant 6).*

The two organisations have different operational models, use different systems and have a different customer base. System integration posed a challenge.

*“Telkom enterprise has its own systems and the other one will also have their own systems, so it is important that the two systems actually speak one language” (Participant 2).*

By integrating these two entities, culture posed a serious challenge. The number of employees that moved over to BCX meant that the culture they were used to was moving with them. This problem was enhanced with the following statement.

*“There was never a cultural group wide intervention to bring all of this together as one group” (Participant 4).*

Based on this information it seems that BCX is currently a company where more than one organisational culture is present, this will have a serious impact on performance.

According to (Albrecht et al 2015), organisational culture will have an impact on employee performance as it directs the performance behaviour and ultimately the performance of the organisation.

#### **5.4.3.2 Sub-theme: Cost reduction intervention**

The cost reduction intervention by Telkom Enterprise is presented in Table 5.20 below.

**Table 5.20: Cost reduction intervention**

Sub- Theme	Emerging Theme
The 189 Labour process	Cost reduction intervention
The 197 Labour process	
Cost reduction	
No central control	

The cost reduction intervention was a primary focus to reduce employment costs. Two separate cost reduction interventions were implemented during this change process. With the view to reduce overhead cost and expenditure; a Section 189 labour process to retrench employees, and a Section 197 labour process to transfer employees to BCX were implemented. With the Section 189 labour process, affected employees were offered voluntary separation or early retirement packages.

In affected areas where the target was not reached, employees' services were terminated. This is supported by the following comment.

*“Section 189 is when the company actually propose to reduce the number of staff due to overhead cost and expenditure; they will either work with the voluntary separation, early retirement packages or the termination of service” (Participant 4).*

Problems were experienced because there was no delegated structure in place to manage this intervention process. It was expected of the Human Resource Division to manage the process, however, due to capacity challenges they were snowed under with mountains of paperwork that was generated as a result of the Section 189 separation process, as confirmed by the following statement.

*Section 189 resulted in Human Resource personnel being extremely inundated with administrative paperwork. For the change intervention you need to have a separate team, a transformation team, or a transition team handling the major issues (Participant 5).*

The merger of a part of Telkom Business/Enterprise with Business Connexion to form the new BCX Company happened in 2016 after the approval by the Competition Tribunal of South Africa (South Africa 2008). The merger concept is defined by Sherman and Hart (2006) as an integration of two or more organisations, in which assets and liabilities of the selling organisation(s) are taken up by the buying organisation. To transfer employees from Telkom Business/Enterprise to BCX, a Section 197 labour process was followed. Although the aim was not to get rid of employees, but many employees developed feelings that they were not welcome within Telkom anymore and they started looking for alternative work.

*“The minute you start mentioning section 197 and stuff like that you know they will be retrenchment, and that business will be put out there and that we are going to change the leadership” (Participant 1).*

During this time of change in this case in the form of a merger, the need for information increases significantly to ensure a smooth change transition (Simoes & Esposito 2014). Different communication channels were used by the organisation to convey the change to its employees.

Effective employee communication is a major problem during organisational change that has an impact on merger success. According to Hiatt (2006), when organisations go through mergers and acquisitions, employees are often left in the dark in terms of why the mergers are necessary, what future do these changes hold for them and most importantly, the assurance from management that their jobs will be secure after the merger process. Muller (2006) suggested that a merger may result in high levels of anxiety, uncertainty, low morale, low job performance, high staff turnover and absenteeism.

#### **5.4.4 Theme: The merger communication strategy**

The second research objective was to determine *what communication strategy was used during the merger*. Participants were asked the following question with a view to determine how they perceived the communication during the change: “*What is your take on communication during the time when the organisation went through a merger change?*” Two sub-themes were defined to answer the research objective. Change communication and communication channels that were used.

##### **5.4.4.1 Sub-theme: change communication**

The change communication used by the organisation is presented in Table 5.21 below.

**Table 5.21: The change communication used by the organisation**

Sub- Theme	Emerging Theme
No or very little feedback	Change Communication
Feedback raise more questions	
One-way communication	
Many miss information through the grapevine	
Information was filtered	
Official of miscommunication	

From the contributions of participants, they have a clear understanding of the importance of communication during organisational change. All participants agree on the importance of effective communication during organisational change such as a merger. According to some participants, effective communication plays an integral part in the building of trust between the organisation and its employees.

*“Communication is the key foundation of trust, a key component of our CHART values (CHART = Continuous Improvement, Honesty, Accountability, Responsibility, and Teamwork). These are values that we as employees committed to in order to make our organisation operate competitively.” (Participant 5).*



It is important for management to delegate trained personnel to communicate important messages, particularly those related to live-changing organisational changes such as mergers and acquisitions. From a human resource perspective, it is stipulated that with the delegation of authority, it is the responsibility of senior management to inform and provide feedback to employees, especially where employees' services were terminated. From participants' contribution the importance of effective change communication was not recognised.

*"I think to date the employees are not necessarily aware of what is coming at an operational level, even to a large extent that even at a senior level we are provided very little information about changes within the organisation". (Participant 6).*

When the change came to the attention of affected employees, many questions were asked and feedback was expected from management. Some of the participants reported that communication was one-way with very little feedback.

*"The feedback that comes through was not concrete feedback; there were always more questions on the feedback that was actually received" (Participant 6).*

Various scholars have studied the subject of communications over the years and agree that employee communications play a critical role when organisations go through structural changes (Oakland & Oakland 2001).

Change communication refers to any change-related communicated message that management shares with employees regarding the organisational change or facets of the organisational change (Lewis 2011). According to Valant (2008:15), a lack of clear and open communication often causes organisational mergers to fail. The failure to communicate drops the morale of everyone involved in the merger process where grapevine or organisational "gossip" may take over, as per the following statement:

*"The information we got was either second hand or incorrect and people's emotions being at the fore, it created a distorted picture, meaning that the rumours became bigger rumours, false information got distorted even more" (Participant 5).*

According to Aguilera et al (2004), when communication is not effective during merger, employees feel that their jobs are not secure, their level of trust dwindles, and this may lead to overall negativity regarding the merger process. Burner (2004) agrees with statements above on the importance of communication in mergers by stating that while aspects such as executive leadership, effective implementation processes, integration planning, staff structuring and change management are critical, communication with stakeholders remains the cornerstone of all mergers and acquisitions. The quality of communication is important to ensure effective employee performance.

*“That is why the employees felt that there is no longer maybe trust relationship and again they may be a factor that comes into play which might be job safety, miscommunications will actually result in those factors being eminent” (Participant 2).*

In the case of the merger that resulted in the formation of the new organisation (BCX), participants feel that communication was not effectively implemented. This is because there were feelings of uncertainty and anxiety among employees about the new organisation having to change leadership (Participant 1). The new organisation has also seen many employees exiting the organisation, joining other organisations. The results are consistent with literature which shows that there is a clear link between the quality of communication and the successful integration of two organisations (Chambers & Honeycutt 2009; Pritchett 2006).

#### **5.4.4.2 Sub-theme: Communication channels**

Communication channels used by the organisations are presented in Table 5.22 below.

**Table 5.22: Communication channels used by the organisation**

Sub- Theme	Emerging Theme
Media	Communication channels
Emails	
Internal television broadcast	
The grapevine	
Staff meetings	
Roadshows	
Union representatives	

The initiator of the change communication was from top management, they used different communication channels to convey the change message. Primary communication channels used by the organisation were emails, television broadcast and roadshows, the grapevine and the media. When change is announced within any organisation it activates response from employees as highlighted by the following comment.

*“It created the fear of the unknown; the staff will always be in a questioned mode, what is next?” (Participant 6).*

One of the biggest sources of dissatisfaction reported by participants was the announcement by the company through the media of its intention to reduce its labour force.

*“It is quite disappointing to learn of your performance or company’s intention from the media” (Participant 5).*

A consequence of this communication was that it had a negative impact on employee engagement as employees felt that they were not valued.

*“It sets a tone that the world out there plays better role than your immediate employees and it also speaks of the importance of your valuable assets which are your employees” (Participant 3).*

All employees have access to a company email address that is used for internal communications. It is a very effective channel for distributing information fast throughout the organisation. However, it has its limitations as one of the participants mentioned.

*“Emails is not enough to manage the organisation; it requires interaction with your people” (Participant 3).*

To achieve interaction with the employees, top management should arrange road shows with the purpose of providing feedback to employees and listen to possible grievances. Roadshows normally bring about transparency and give employees the opportunity to ask hard questions that even some of the management team are unable to answer.

*“They are communicating as little as possible. We had a roadshow with the CEO, and he was very vague; there is no black and white, everything is grey” (Participant 4).*

The outcome of roadshows, in many cases does not give the answers as expected. In many cases the feedback provided by management generates more questions as explained in the following statement.

*“There is nothing you have gained; they will tell you the things you know and the things you complain about” (Participant 4).*

Staff meetings are a form of communication used by management to engage with employees about matters pertaining to the organisation and employee performance (Argenti 2009). This form of communication plays a pivotal role in strengthening the relationship between the organisation and its employees (Kalla 2006).

From middle management there was some effort to share the information through staffing meetings with employees. In some cases, it was a challenge as they were expected to give answers to very difficult questions.

*“We have questions that we are asked, and management was not in position to answer actually those questions, even if you have determined the body language you could see that there was some sense of fear” (Participant 5).*

While management is expected to play a significant role in the communication process, studies have shown that some are ill-equipped to effectively communicate the merger process to employees (Salame 2006; Galpin & Herndon 2000). One of the reasons why managers may be ill-equipped to communicate the merger is that they themselves may be poorly informed of the merger process (Bruner 2004). This may result in some of them communicating less effectively (Weber, Rachman-Moore & Tarba 2012).

In the absence or lack of effective communication, the grapevine becomes a very important channel within the organisation. This is supported by scholars who opined that grapevine communication "is usually oral and generally occurs in cluster transmission patterns" (Papa et al 2007:63). It may begin, flow and end anywhere in an organisation. As a trustworthy communication channel, the grapevine poses its own set of challenges.

*"In many instances there was a lot of corridor talking and gossip, meaning that the information we got was either second hand or incorrect and people's emotions being at the fore, it created a distorted picture" (Participant 5).*

The rumours and false information have a negative impact on employee morale that leads to employee disengagement, which might affect employee productivity. Although the grapevine is usually incomplete, information shared through it tends to be more accurate than inaccurate and largely travels very fast (Papa et al 2007).

*"When they remove the unions, it makes it difficult for the internal teams to come and talk to the employees" (Participant 1).*

Based on these comments, participants were not satisfied with the communication during this process and what they consider to be unethical behaviour by top management. According to Montsho (2013), an effective internal communication system, of which communication channels are a critical element, is considered critical in helping to translate the vision, mission and objectives of an organisation into reality.

#### **5.4.5 Theme: Stakeholders communication perceptions**

The second research objective was to determine *how internal stakeholders perceive the communication during the change event*. The following question was posed to the participants. *“How do you think communication especially during merger influenced the organization work force or the performance of the employees?”* Four sub-themes were defined to answer this research objective namely; leadership role, employees experience, organisational performance and service delivery.

##### **5.4.5.1 Sub-theme: Leadership role**

The leadership roles in the merger process are presented in Table 5.23 below.

**Table 5.23: The leadership roles in the merger process**

Sub- Theme	Emerging Theme
No clear direction	Leadership Role
Top management do not communicate	
Expectations are not met	
Promises are not realised	
Trust relationship went down	
No clear strategy	

Most of the participants are of the view that the merger experienced communication problems from the beginning. It is clear from participants that the implementation of staff reduction processes was not clearly communicated.

*“There has never been any engagement to prepare the employees or explain the rationale behind that” (Participant 3).*

Top leadership gave very little direction in the form of a change management plan. The communication was one way, with very little opportunity for employees to give their input. In many cases even senior management was in the dark, did not know what was going on or what should happen next.

*“The information that comes through was not concrete feedback; there were always more questions on the feedback that was actually received” (Participant 5).*

Employees pushed to get feedback from the organisation, the lack thereof led to the grapevine becoming a reliable source of information. When employees pushed for feedback, the organisation responded with information that was not helpful (Participant 5).

*“They tried to remove the representatives of the employees in a sense that they remove the unions” (Participant 1).*

This action by the organisation created more confusion and uncertainty that had a negative impact on employee performance. Top leadership made one serious error by promising employee’s certain outcomes that never materialised. This finding is highlighted with the following statement.

*“In fact, we were told that whatever benefits we had now in Telkom will be better off or equivalent to Telkom, then we moved to Business Connexion and nothing of that sort happened, our benefits were actually taken away from you” (Participant 4).*

This had a devastating impact on the trust relationship between management and employees as supported by the following statement.

*“There is one thing that you can break with between the people and management is trust and if the trust is broken it takes very long time to actually get that back, so communication is the key foundation of trust” (Participant 5).*

Something that was missing was a clear strategy from top management to give direction to the organisation. According to Phoenix (2006), organisations present mergers to shareholders as a strategy to create wealth, they often fail to recognise the importance of communicating this strategy to their employees.

*“So, in terms of communication I think senior leadership is also walking on eggshells, meaning that we need a clear strategy; have understanding of which role are we going to play and what model are we going to utilize going forward” (Participant 5).*

According to Aguilera et al (2004), when communication is not effective during a merger, employees feel that their jobs are not secure, their level of trust dwindles, and this may lead to overall negativity regarding the merger process. Burner (2004) agrees with the statements above on the importance of communication in mergers by stating that while aspects such as executive leadership, effective implementation processes, integration planning, staff structuring and change management are critical, communication with stakeholders remains the cornerstone of all mergers and acquisitions.

#### **5.4.5.2 Sub-theme: Employees experience**

The employee experience is presented in Table 5.24 below.

**Table 5.24: The impact of the merger on employees**

Sub- Theme	Emerging Theme
Morale of employees going down	Employee experience
Employees are not happy	
Impact on families	
Job security fears	
Little support for employees	

Hubbard and Purcell (2011) perceive employee communication as a "psychological contract" between the organisation and its employees.

This means that at any given time, including during the process of organisational change, the organisation should feel indebted to communicating important information to its employees. This is supported by Lewis (2000) who stated when this communication happens, it will increase chances that change will be embraced and successfully implemented. If the change communication is weak it creates fear within the workforce.

*“In terms of job safety or job security when employees feel that element of uncertainty ... there might be some retrenchment at a later stage which will affect their lives and their families lives, so as a result some even decide to jump ship before the actually got into that situation” (Participant 2).*



This is supported in the literature as Muller (2006) suggests that while the organisation may see the need to be part of a merger; this process may result in high levels of anxiety, uncertainty, low employee morale, low employee performance, high staff turnover and absenteeism.

*“Because everyone is worried about their job, am I still going to be employed, what are the implications?” (Participant 6)*

Communication has a direct impact on employee morale. Rubinstein (2011) stated that in most cases, decisions regarding mergers drag out, communication is lacking, and employee morale is destroyed in the process.

This is supported by Rogelberg (2016) who indicated that when employees' morale is low, this can gradually destroy their commitment in the organisation, negatively affect products and services and alienate the customers that the organisation serves.

#### **5.4.5.3 Sub-theme: Organisational performance**

The impact of the merger on organisational performance is presented in Table 5.25 below.

**Table 5.25: The impact of the merger on organisational performance**

Sub- Theme	Emerging Theme
Not sure what is going on	Organisational performance
High turnover in management	
High turnover of competent people	
Duplication in systems	
People are micromanaged	
Employee performance went down	

To transfer employees from Telkom Business/Enterprise to BCX, a Section 197 labour process was followed. Although the aim was not to get rid of employees, many employees felt that they are not welcome within Telkom anymore and they started looking for alternative work.

*“The minute you start mentioning section 197 and stuff like that you know they will be retrenchment, and that business will be put out there and that we are going to change the leadership” (Participant 1).*

Brown et al. (2006) reported that during the merger process, employees tend to leave the organisation as a result of low-decision latitude, less promotional opportunities and weak communication. This results in the organisation losing high skilled employees to its competitors. Mergers have a major impact on people within the organisation as it disturbs the organisation and kills the morale of the employees.

*“We normally loose good skills and that send the company to a spiral to actually a down road tend” (Participant 3).*

Continuous leadership changes have a negative effect on the day to day operations of the organisation. They are responsible for communicating the vision of the organisation and give it a purpose. Without them the organisation becomes a ship with a broken rudder.

*“An organisation that continues to make leadership changes often like that, it actually disturbs the organisation and it also kills the morale of the employees and we normally loose good skills (Participant 3).*

In the context of employee communication, participants feel that even after the merger, things have not improved from the period before and during the merger process.

*“Marrying Telkom and Business Connexion was the worst thing that has ever happened” (Participant 1).*

One of the participants felt that the problem is that the respective cultures of the two organisations before the merger still exists.

*“We are not sure whether we should be utilising the Telkom enterprise processes, or Business Connexion coordination processes, so it is still those mixture of the two, informally communicated, so it depends on who see what is relevant then they will ahead and implement accordingly” (Participant 6).*

All participants concluded that the merger was not successful and that it is on the brink of a failure if something is not done urgently. Two or more cultures exist within BCX and there are two groupings of employees namely, those who support the Telkom culture and those that support the Business Connexion culture.

*“They should have got rid of both cultures to say that you are not Business Connexion and that you are not Telkom and form a new culture for the employees and that is something that is still missing” (Participant 5).*

Participants are of the view that there seems to be problems with the communication flow between role players. Employees are in most cases micromanaged and certain communication procedures seem to be forced upon employees, thereby creating distortions.

*“So right now people feel that they are being micro managed because they come in the morning even if you seat behind the screen doing nothing but as long you there, the manager feels like you are doing something which is actually wrong” (Participant 1).*

Some employees regard this merger as not successful as suggested by the following statement:

*“There was no communication, my subordinates knew that I don’t know as much as they don’t know, because nothing was communicated, it was just a mess” (Participant 4).*

Kotter (1996) states that for change to be successful there must be at least 75% buy-in by management in the organisation. This also suggests that change leaders must communicate challenges, risks and opportunities facing the organisation as well as their urgency. If these are not communicated, employees will stay in their comfort zones, not seeing the need for change (Borbye 2010).

#### 5.4.5.4 Sub-theme: service delivery

From the data collected, it is clear how lack of communication during the merger had an impact on service delivery as presented in Table 5.26 below.

**Table 5.26: The impact of the merger on service delivery**

Sub- Theme	Emerging Theme
Impact on customers' business	Service delivery
Poor customer service	
Loss of customers	

BCX is an ICT organisation that provides IT and Telecommunication services to customers in different market segments such as mining, public sector, education, financial sector and others. The success of BCX in engaging and keeping their relationship with these customers hinges on its ability to manage employee communication as employees are an interface between BCX and their customers. This relationship is confirmed with the following statement.

*“Because if you cannot keep your employees happy then it is guaranteed that your customers will suffer” (Participant 6)*

Telkom Enterprise was moved over to BCX with its customer base. There was no communication to explain to employees what role they were going to play and what business model needed to be followed to ensure that the customer base was served.

*“There is no concentration towards the operation of the organisation to ensure that the customers are serviced, because everyone is worried about their job. Am I still going to be employed, what are the implications? What am I doing now, what functions?” (Participant 6)*

According to Rogelberg (2005), when employee morale is low, it can gradually destroy the commitment to the organisation, negatively affect products and services that the organisation offers and alienate the customers that the organisation serves.

*A misinformed employee means a lost customer because customers rely on employees to provide them with accurate information. One of the best ways to keep your customers is through effective communication (Participant 3).*

Customers do not accept mediocre service any longer, it is easy to move to a competitor (Schumacher et al 2016).

#### **5.4.6 Qualitative Conclusion**

It can be concluded that the merger process was not managed properly, it appeared to be a rushed process conducted with very little planning. Organisational communication on all levels was inadequate, ineffective and poor. Management and employees were in the dark on what was going to happen. This created a lot of uncertainty among employees.

The company suffered a major setback as the turmoil created resulted in low employee morale and performance. Affected employees were more focused on securing their livelihood by exploring alternative opportunities. It can be concluded that service delivery was negatively impacted, with a potential impact on the organisations' bottom line.

#### **5.5 Consolidation of the quantitative and qualitative findings**

In this section the findings of the quantitative and qualitative studies are consolidated, based on the change theory by Nudge (2008). Although there are many models for organisational change that can be used, the researcher found Nudge's change theory (2008) more relevant for the organisation in which the study was conducted. Nudge's change theory (2008), which is not too different from the other change models, articulates the change process in a more attractive and efficient way and it is more employee-oriented (Hanson 2019). For the purpose of this study the Nudge change theory (2008) will be regarded as the best practise to implement change within the organisation. The findings of Quantitative and Qualitative data analysis are compared with the different steps of Nudge's change theory (2008) to reflect what has happened in practice.

### **5.5.1 Step 1: Clearly define the change and communicate it**

*Define the change and communicate it:* Before any change is implemented employees should be informed of the reasons why the change is necessary and how it will effected them (Datta 1991). Qualitative findings indicate that the two organisations have different operational models, use different systems, have a different customer base and each has a distinctive culture on how things get done. Based on this findings it was clear that the culture and system integration posed a challenge in this merger.

It was found that most of the participants are of the view that the merger experienced communication problems from the beginning. It is clear from participants that the implementation of staff reduction processes was not clearly communicated. *“There has never been any engagement to prepare the employees or explain the rationale behind that”.* (Participant #3).

Quantitative findings indicate that information about the merger was not clear and the implications of the merger was not communicated to the effected employees (See questions 11.3, 11.6 and 11.9). This finding was supported by the qualitative findings that reported that communication problems were experienced, as there was no delegated structure in place to manage the process. It was expected that the Human Resource Division would manage the process, but due to capacity challenges the process was not effectively managed.

From the quantitative data it was found that the information communicated by management during the merger process was not consistent. Evidence was found in the statement that “Management took accountability for the communication messages shared during the merger” A total of 77.3% of the respondents submitted a neutral, disagree or strongly disagree score for this statement (See question 12.9 data distribution score in Appendix E).

The reason for this finding was highlighted by interview participants who indicated that management was poorly informed, that created confusion among employees. Respondents reported that they learnt from the media about the merger. This was one of the biggest sources of dissatisfaction; the announcement by the company through the media of its intention to reduce its labour force. When the change came to the

attention of affected employees, many questions were asked and feedback was expected from management. Some of the participants reported that it was one-way communication with very little feedback. *“There were always more questions on the feedback that was actually received”*. (Participant #6).

Based on this findings it is clear that the organisation did not apply the first step of the Nudge’s change theory (2008).

### **5.5.2 Step 2: Consider change from employee’s point of view**

*Employee engagement and involvement:* This step deals with taking the employees’ views into consideration before engaging in any change process. By doing this, change managers endorse the view “people are our greatest asset” (Guest 2014:53).

According the quantitative findings, respondents reported that the implications of the merger was not communicated to them (See question 12.5 data distribution score in Appendix E), and that the staff members were reluctant to accept this merger (see question 11.7 data distribution score in Appendix E). According to qualitative findings, the aim was not to get rid of employees, but many employees developed feelings that they were not welcome within Telkom anymore and they started looking for alternative employment. The stress related to the change was worsened by the fact that during the change process, the employee representatives of the different unions were removed. Thus employees lost a communication channel. When change is announced within any organisation *“the staff will always be in a questioned mode, what is next?”* (Participant #6).

Based on this findings it is clear that the organisation did not apply the second step of the Nudge’s change theory (2008).

### **5.5.3 Step 3: Use evidence to show the best options**

*Benefit:* Once management knows how to present the change to fit with the employee working culture, they need to gather evidence to prove how useful the change will be to the employees (Kotter & Cohen 2015).

Respondents disagree that the implications of the merger was communicated to them (see question 11.6, data distribution score in Appendix E). Respondents also disagree that management was aware of what employees should know about the merger (see question 12.10, data distribution score in Appendix E). This finding was supported by qualitative findings that stated that when change came to the attention of the affected employees, many questions were asked and feedback was expected from management. *“The feedback that came through was not concrete, there were always more questions on the feedback that was actually received”*. (Participant #6).

Some of the participants reported that communication was one-way, with very little feedback at all. In many instances, even senior management was in the dark in terms of communicating, not knowing what was going on, or what should happen next. *“We had questions that we asked, and management was not in a position to answer, and the their body language was that which resembled fear”* (Participant #5)

Based on this findings it is clear that the organisation did not apply the third step of the Nudge’s change theory (2008).

#### **5.5.4 Step 4: Present the change as a choice**

*Communication during change:* presentation of change as a choice to employees. This step suggests that change should not be enforced on employees but be presented to them as a choice (Vakola & Paraskevas, 2018).

Quantitative data indicates that there were perceptions that management abused their power to make their authority felt (see question 11.11, data distribution score in Appendix E). From the qualitative data it was found that employees only had one of two options, get retrenched or get transferred to the new organisation. With the view to reduce overhead cost and expenditure, a Section 189 labour process to retrench employees and a Section 197 labour process to transfer employees to BCX were implemented with reduced benefits. *“The minute you start mentioning section 197 and stuff like that, you know that there will be retrenchment and change in leadership”*. (Participants #1). In affected areas where the target was not reached, employee's services were terminated.



Based on this findings it is clear that the organisation did give the employees a choice in the change process as described by Nudge's change theory (2008), but that the choice was in the favour of the organisation.

#### **5.5.5 Step 5: Listen to employee feedback**

Listening to employees' feedback and their experiences as the process unfolds, as this makes them feel valued as organisational stakeholders and that their opinions matter. This will in turn make them willing to give change a chance (Darnell, 2012).

From the quantitative data, respondents disagreed with the statement that management assured them that their views will be listened to (see question 11.10, data distribution score in Appendix E). Respondents disagree that they were given an opportunity to air their views during the merger process (see question 12.1, data distribution score in Appendix E).

Also, respondents disagree that they were afforded the opportunity to have further discussions with management after merger presentations were made (see question 12.3, data distribution score in Appendix E). On the statement that management asked them how they feel about the new organisation, respondents disagreed (see question 13.4, data distribution score in Appendix E).

To achieve interaction with the employee's, top management arranged road shows with the aim of giving feedback to employees and listen to possible grievances. Roadshows normally bring about transparency and give employees the opportunity to ask hard questions that even some of the management team are unable to answer. *"They are communicating as little as possible. We had a roadshow with the CEO, and he was very vague; there is no black and white, everything is grey"* (Participant #4). The outcome of roadshows, in many cases does not give the answers as expected. In many cases the feedback provided by management generates more questions as explained in the following statement.

Based on this findings it is clear that the organisation did not listen to employees in the change process as describe by Nudge's change theory (2008), but that they expected that the employees only listen to them, one way communication.

#### **5.5.6 Step 6: Limit obstacles**

*Limit obstacles:* For change to be effective, employees need to immediately apply the process that come with change. This will be possible only if obstacles to change are removed as so that the employees' enthusiasm to change does not plummet.

It was found that respondents agree that communication after the merger with different reporting levels was encouraged (see question 13.21, data distribution score in Appendix E). But they disagree with the statements that it can have a limiting effect on their work performance. They disagree with the statements that work instructions are clarified to enable them to do their work (see question 13.10, data distribution score in Appendix E), and that the new company structure makes reporting easy (see question 13.18, data distribution score in Appendix E).

Interviews participants supported these findings, they are of the view that there seems to be problems with the communication flow between role players. In practice, the culture difference between the two organisations was a major obstacle that received limited attention by management. Two or more cultures exist within the new/merged organisation. *"They should have got rid of both cultures and form a new culture that represents a new organisation".* (Participant #5). *Employees are in most cases micromanaged and certain communication procedures seem to be forced upon employees, thereby creating distortions.* *"So right now, people feel that they are being micro managed".* (Participant #1).

Based on this findings it is clear that the organisation did not apply the six step of the Nudge's change theory (2008) namely to remove obstacles that can have an impact on employee morale and performance.

### **5.5.7 Step 7: Keep momentum up with short-term wins**

*Communication after change: Communicate short term wins and achievements:* This step deals with management's assurance that change is maintained. Therefore it is important to communicate short term wins and achievements.

Respondents agree with the statement that management reported back on the outcome of the merger (see question 13.1, data distribution score in Appendix E). However, respondents disagree with the statement that communication covered the long--term strategy of the new company (see question 13.12, data distribution score in Appendix E). Findings indicate that although there was a change strategy in place, implementation was not very effective. Though it was expected of management to communicate achievements from the merger process, this never happened as communication was more vague than before. *"They are communicating as little as possible. We had roadshows with the CEO, and they were very vague"*. (Participant #4).

Based on this findings it is clear that the organisation did not apply the seven steps of Nudge's change theory (2008) effectively, namely to keep momentum up with short-term wins.

## **5.6 Chapter summary**

The main issue of the study was addressed by asking specific research questions that attempted to explore and describe individual employees' communication experiences at the ICT organisation that went through a merger. The study found that employees are not satisfied with communication as it happened before, during, and after the merger process. To ensure an effective balance in communication between management and the employees, it is important that employees have a voice. The next chapter discusses summary results of the study, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to critically analyse the role of employee communication during organisational change. In chapter 5, the findings from both quantitative and qualitative data was presented and analysed. The focus of this chapter is to confirm whether research questions and objectives were achieved. Furthermore, a summary of research findings is presented. The chapter ends with summary conclusions from the research as well as recommendations for future studies.

#### **6.2 Research questions for the study**

The research questions for the study:

Research question 1: What was the communication strategy used during the merger?

Research question 2: What was the internal stakeholders' level of satisfaction with communication channels used during merger?

Research question 3: How did internal stakeholders perceive the communication during merger?

#### **6.3 Research objectives of the study**

The research objectives for the study:

Research objective 1: To explore the communication strategy that was used during the merger.

Research objective 2: To describe the internal stakeholder's level of satisfaction regarding communication channels used during the merger.

Research objective 3: To explore the stakeholders' perspective of communication during merger.

## **6.4 Summary findings from the study**

This section discusses results from the analysis of the data collected with structured interviews and the questionnaire. Summary findings from the research are presented by objective. First, demographic findings.

### **6.4.1 Demographic findings**

Although the organisation has a diverse demographic race profile, out of six employees who participated in interviews, five were black and one was Indian. Four participants were male and two were female with ages ranging from 40 to 51 years. Questionnaire respondents were from diverse demographical groupings to ensure that data was captured from different points of view. Male respondents were a dominant grouping in the study, and different ages were equally represented.

Respondents who were African were dominant at 65%, with whites accounting for 19%, Indians and Coloureds accounted for 8% each. Respondents on senior management level were 19.8%, while middle management and operational level accounted for 44.5% and 35.6% respectively. All respondents have a qualification higher than matric and 83% have more than 21 years' experience in the organisation. This is an indication of a well-educated workforce within the organisation. 81% of respondents in the newly merged company comes from the Telkom Business/Enterprise and 19% from Business Connexion.

### **6.4.2 Research objective 1**

*To describe the communication strategy used during the merger of the companies*

Before the merger, Telkom Business/Enterprise went through a Section 189 labour process with the view to reduce overhead costs and expenditure. In affected areas where the intended head count cut was not achieved, employees' were terminated.

Communication problems were experienced because there was no delegated structure in place to manage the process. It was expected that the Human Resource Division will manage the process, but due to capacity challenges the process was not effectively managed.

This was supported in the findings where respondents agreed with the statement that information communicated by management during the merger process was not clear or that the implications of the merger were communicated to them (See questions 11.4 and 11.6), supported by participant #3. After the Section 189 process, a Section 197 labour process was followed to transfer employees from Telkom Business/Enterprise to BCX. Many employees did not like the idea and decided to leave the company. The merger process was managed by external consultants who were appointed to ensure the effective management of the organisational change. Questions were put to management and they were not able to answer adequately. This was supported by a finding that management did not listen to the views of the employees and did not take the feelings of the employees into consideration (See questions 11.10 and 11.12), supported by participant #1. Communication was very poor and employees' uncertainty was high, this had an impact on employee performance.

#### **6.4.3 Research objective 2**

*To describe the internal stakeholder's level of satisfaction regarding communication channels used during the merger*

Key stakeholders in this merger were the organisation, external consultants, top management, management, employees and customers. Communication channels used during the merger were emails, roadshows and meetings. Management did not provide adequate feedback throughout the change process. This is supported by the disagreement with the statement by respondents that internal communication channels provided regular updates to ensure that they have access to the latest information at all times (See questions 12.4), supported by participant #5.

They were expected to maintain lines of communication with employees during the process, without feedback employees were not able to get answers they needed. This lack of feedback had a negative impact on employee perception of the process. Employees were not happy with the communication process in general. For some, there was no communication at all.

The implication of the merger was not communicated and that employees were not given an opportunity to air their views and that communication channels were not working effectively (See questions 12.1, 12.4 and 12.5), supported by participant # 6. During this period, management did not take responsibility for the communication of messages because they were left in the dark as well (See questions 12.1 and 12.9), supported by participant # 6 . In the absence of effective channels of communication, the grapevine became a preferred mode of communication among the employees. There was a lot of corridor talk and gossip, the information obtained in this way was either second hand or incorrect. This finding was supported in the results where respondents indicated that information that was shared was not consistent and did not address cultural differences from the two organisations.

With regards to variable mean score comparisons, the finding was that respondents that previously belonged to Business Connexion submitted significant higher mean rank DMCS, AMCS, and AMOI scores than those that come from Telkom Business/Enterprise. A possible explanation for these mean rank high scores from Business Connexion participants was that they were not that affected by the merger. Respondents from Telkom Business/Enterprise were the ones who were really affected because they were transferred as a result of the merger to Business Connexion.

#### **6.4.4 Research objective 3**

*To explore the stakeholders' perspective of communication during merger of the companies*

Based on data collected, it is clear that employees are not satisfied with communication in general and the communication process years after the merger happened. There is a feeling that the merger was not only unsuccessful, but on the brink of a failure if something is not done urgently.

There are currently different cultures in the merged organisation, which are not necessarily aligned. These two cultures continue to clash with the different grouping maintaining their belief systems. Based on the findings, it is assumed that the merger did not meet employees' communication expectations.

This is supported by the finding that It is evident that employees do not identify with the new company and are not committed to become part of the new company (see Question 13.5 and 13.7), supported by participant # 4. When employees are not satisfied with how messages are communicated or information is disseminated, the grapevine tends to be preferred as a trusted source for information.

These results suggest that employees will welcome effective and transparent communication by management during the process of change. Therefore, examining employees' perception of communication during merger is important in reducing the level of dissatisfaction.

It was found that communication is still a problem after the merger and the long-term strategy of the organisation is not clear; there are reporting structure problems and resource allocation is not fair (See Question 13.9, 13.12, 13.18 and 13.19), supported by participants # 1 and # 5. Mergers will continue to be a constant feature in the modern corporate environment. The merging of these two organisations has created by far one of the largest Information Technology and Communication organisations in the country.

Respondents disagree with the statement that customers and other stakeholders had a favourable response to the merger ( $\bar{x} = 2.14$ ), as well as with the statement that research was regularly conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication ( $\bar{x} = 2.31$ ). These low mean values are an indication that the respondents disagree with these statements and that customers did not respond favourably to the merger as it influenced their business operations.

## **6.5 Research conclusions**

In this section conclusions from the study are presented by research question

### **6.5.1 Research question 1**

*What was the communication strategy used during the merger?*

Noting the importance of a communication strategy, it can be concluded that there was no clear communication strategy in place before the merger.



It can be concluded that communication before, during and after the merger was one-directional and downwards with very little feedback provided. Participants reported that the information provided by management was not accurate, was irrelevant and that the implications of the merger were not communicated to employees. Management did not consider the views of employees nor take their feelings into consideration. It is clear that there was no proper strategy in place and that lack of effective communication will have an impact on employee performance.

### **6.5.2 Research question 2**

*What was the internal stakeholders' level of satisfaction with communication channels used during merger?*

It was concluded that there was no proper internal communication with employees during the three merger phases. Employees were not happy with the communication process in general. For some of them, there has never been any form of communication. In the absence or lack of effective communication, the grapevine therefore becomes very important as a communication channel, although the information obtained this way was either second hand or incorrect. Findings suggest that management did not give feedback to employees throughout the change process. Without feedback, they were not able to fill information gaps employees had and that had a negative impact on the performance of those they supervise. The implication of the merger was not communicated evidently, employees were not given an opportunity to air their views and that communication channels were not working effectively.

Based on the results of the research, there are a difference in the DMCS, AMCS, and AMOI scores of those employees affected by the merger and of those employees non-affected affected by the merger.

### **6.5.3 Research question 3**

*How did internal stakeholders perceive the communication during merger?*

Findings indicate that regarding stakeholder communication, employees feel that they had to beg to get feedback from management and without that feedback the grapevine became the most preferred source of information. This created more confusion and uncertainty, which had a negative impact on employee performance. It can be concluded that employees lost trust in the organisation and many decided to resign and were lost to the ICT labour market. Therefore, in many cases business operations for some of their customers were affected negatively. It can be concluded therefore that all these challenges had an impact on employee performance and the bottom line of BCX business operations.

## **6.6 Recommendations**

The recommendations are made from a theoretical, practical and methodological perspective, starting with the theoretical recommendations.

### ***6.6.1 Theoretical recommendations***

- (1) Future research should try to integrate the different identity theories into one integrated theory.
- (2) Future research should try to establish the relationship between merger communication and job involvement.

### ***6.6.2 Practical recommendations***

When communicating change, the organisation should place employees as their most important asset at the centre of those discussions. It is recommended that the organisation implement a formal communication strategy. As discussed in sections 3.4.1 – 3.4.4, some of the key elements of a communication strategy include (a) an audience, (b) communication channels, (c) messaging, and (d) stakeholder engagement.

## **6.7 Recommendations for BCX**

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

- **Employee communication:**

During the change process, it is imperative that management is equipped with information to be communicated to the employees to avoid feelings such as uncertainty, employee entropy, dissatisfaction and fear. It is therefore important for top management to consider ways of enhancing communication channels in a way that will make employee communication meaningful.

It is recommended that Senior Management take the lead regarding the clarity and quality of information to be shared with the employees. To ensure the clarity and quality of information entails committing resources with required communication skills.

## **6.8 Recommendations for future research**

This study focussed on employee communication at organisational level; it is recommended that future studies be conducted to investigate how employee communication personally affects employees in terms of their day to day life experiences. These studies need to investigate the relative impact of employee communication at employee personal level.

Besides limiting the study to BCX only, future studies need to consider expanding the population base to South African organisations within the ICT sector that have gone through the merger process. Furthermore, future studies need to consider expanding the population to other sectors in South Africa.

Future studies to also look at the role that labour organisations or unions play in merger communication, as well as the role that employee communication plays in state-owned organisations.

## **6.9 Chapter summary**

The purpose of this study was to critically analyse the role of employee communication during organisational change. From the results of this study it is evident that effective communication is critical for successful business operations. For a merger to be successful, there must be a well-planned merger communication strategy and competent people should be appointed to drive this process. All stakeholders need to be involved in the execution process and supportive structures need to be in place to ensure success. Employees feel that roadshows are a relevant communication channel when addressing their concerns as they (employees) can meet face-to-face with the organisation's top management. Consistent and effective communication by management is crucial to avoid high turnover rates, especially at the time when the organisation goes through a process of a new beginning. Based on the findings of this study it can be concluded that all the objectives were achieved.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: RESEARCH APPROVAL FORM



BCX Campus  
1021 Lenchen Avenue North  
Centurion  
0157  
[www.bcx.co.za](http://www.bcx.co.za)

**To:** Aubrey Croucamp  
**From:** Puleng Dikgale  
**Subject:** Permission to conduct an analysis of strategic integrated communications within BCX.

Dear Sir,

I have just completed the proposal module for Masters Degree in Communication Sciences. My topic has been approved by the institution I study with, University of South Africa (UNISA). I would like to request ethical consideration for my study topic, "An analysis of strategic integrated communications within a merged organization: a mixed method approach".

The objective of the study is to (1) explore whether a merged organisation apply strategic integrated communication according to Nieman's (2005) conceptual model (2) to describe the clarity of communication messages in a merged organisation and (3) to describe stakeholder perceptions regarding messages in a merged organisation. Quantitative data will be collected by randomly sending questionnaires to employees, while qualitative data will be collected by means of interviews with selected employees at different levels, for example, operational staff, middle management, senior management and executive management.

The findings of the study will be used solely for study purposes and not distributed for any other purpose and will remain part of the university (UNISA)'s intellectual property. Company Business Code of Ethics and Business Code of Conduct will apply. All data collected will be treated in accordance with the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act No 4 of 2013.

ISO 9001 certified

Business Connexion Proprietary Limited Reg. No. 1993/003683/07  
Directors: DJ Fredericks (Chairman) BC Armstrong LM de Villiers ME Ettling PSC Luthuli LI Mophatlane (CEO) R Nkabinde (CFO) AC Ruiters

British  
Company Secretary: J de Koker



## APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Please may I have feedback on my request for ethical consideration.

Kind regards,



**Dikgale Puleng David**  
Student number - 36907146

**Permission:**

Granted ☒

Not granted ☐



**Managing Executive: Operations Support Services**

**Aubrey Croucamp**

ISO 9001 certified

Business Connexion (Pty) Ltd. Reg. No. 1993/003683/07

Directors: AC Ruiters JF Buchanan NN Kekana LB Mophatlane JM Poluta V Oliver FL Sekha SV Zilwa  
Company Secretary: Johan De Koker



UNISA COMMUNICATION SCIENCE ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 24 June 2019

Dear Mr Puleng Dikgale

**Decision:**  
**Ethics Approval from 24 June**  
**2019 to 23 June 2022**

NHREC Registration #: Rec-  
240816-052  
ERC Reference #: 2019-  
COMMSCIENCE-CHS-36907146  
Name: P Dikgale  
Student #:36907146

**Researcher(s):** Mr P Dikgale

**Supervisor (s):** Dr MJ Hadji

Department of Communication Science  
University of South Africa  
[hadjimj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:hadjimj@unisa.ac.za)  
012 429 2881/082 483 4636

**Working title of research:**

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION AT A MERGED SOUTH  
AFRICAN COMPANY: A MIXED-METHOD APPROACH**

**Qualification:** Master's Degree In Communication

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by Department of Communication Science Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for five years.

*The low risk application was reviewed by the Departmental Ethics Review Committee on 28 May 2019 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was tabled at the Committee meeting on 24 June 2019 for approval.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:



University of South Africa  
Pretorius Street, Muckleneck Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)



1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the **Communication Science Ethics Review Committee**.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (**23 June 2022**). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

The reference number **2019-COMMSCIENCE-CHS-36907146** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,  
Signature :

Mr Siyabonga M. Mfuphi  
Ethics Chair :   
Communication Science Ethics Review Committee  
E-mail: [mfuphi@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mfuphi@unisa.ac.za)  
Tel: (012) 429-8264

Signature :

  
Dr Suryakanthie Chetty  
Ethics Chair : CREC  
E-mail : [chetts@unisa.ac.za](mailto:chetts@unisa.ac.za)  
Tel: 012 429 6267

URERC 25.04.17 - Decision template [V2] - Approve

University of South Africa  
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## **APPENDIX C: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **Pilot study**

**Race:** African

**Gender:** Male

**Age:**

**Department:** Partner Relations

**Occupation:** Senior Specialist

**Years of experience:**

**Date:** 08 August 2019

**Researcher:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, the purpose of the study is to critically analyse the role of employee communication during the organisational change, for example mergers and acquisitions, so this interview is for data collection purposes and information obtained will be used for academic purposes only, the interview is voluntary, meaning you are free to withdraw anytime during the interview should you so wish. Thank you very much for signing the consent form and granting me permission to record this interview. Please note that should you wish to request the outcome of this interview; it is available for you. The interview will take less than 45 minutes, and where possible additional questions may be asked for clarity seeking purposes, just to want to find out if you will be able to stay for this period?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** Thank you very much, the reason why this study is recorded, is to allow the researcher to transcribe the information received through the recordings and interpret the data, and present it as the final report of the study, so the recordings will not be shared with any individual, and will be stored at a safe place which is an external drive of the researcher for a maximum period of five years and will later be discarded.

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** So, tell me, what is your position in the organisation?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** Thank you, and what are your qualifications?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** Thank you very much, please tell me briefly about your current job responsibilities?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** Thank you, so would you say communication plays a role in your current responsibilities?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** Thank you very much, so the organisation recently went through a process of change, organisational change like a merger, what is your take on that? In terms of communication

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** What is your take on communication during the time when the organisation went through a merger change? communication to employees and communication within management and even to you as an employee?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** Thank you very much, You mentioned something very important, internal communication, so if I were to ask you around that, if the merger was to happen, let's say now, or if the whole process was to be re done, what would you expect from the internal communication perspective?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** Thank you very much, so how do you think communication especially during merger influenced the organisation work force or the performance of the employees?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** So in your role you mentioned that as a senior manager for partner relations, communication plays a big role there, so I just want to ask you, what challenges do you think the organisation currently experiences in terms of communication? Generally speaking?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** So, the merger happened, nothing will change, but based on your experience in this organisation the extensive one for that matter, what recommendations can you make to improve on; you mentioned two points, change management and internal communication?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** Yes

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** If I understand you, in a nutshell you are saying organisational communication reflects on organisational identity.

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** Any other comment?

**Interviewee:**

**Researcher:** Thank you very much, and thank you again for agreeing to participate in the study, and thank you for signing the consent form and the next step will be to transcribe the recording to build towards the final report of the study, thank you once again.

**Interviewee:**

## **APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Dear Colleague,**

Thank you for your willingness to participate. Please select the relevant block by ticking the answer most appropriate to you.

### **Section A: Biographical and Demographical Data**

1) Please indicate your gender

Male ☐ Female ☐

2) Please select your age group

18-25 years ☐ 26-30 years ☐ 31-35 years ☐ 36-40 years ☐ 41-45 years ☐ 46-50 years ☐ 51-55 years ☐ 56-60 years ☐ 61 years and above ☐

3) Please indicate your race

African ☐ Indian ☐ Coloured ☐ White ☐

4) Please specify your job level

Executive ☐ Senior Manager ☐ Senior Service Integration Manager ☐ Service Integration Manager ☐ Specialist (Managerial level) ☐ Operational Specialist ☐ Project Leader ☐ Project coordinator ☐

5) Please indicate your combined years of experience

0-10 years ☐ 11-20 years ☐ 21-30 years ☐ 31-40 years ☐

6) Indicate your highest qualification

Matric (Grade 12) ☐ Certificate/Diploma ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Honours Masters ☐ Doctoral/PhD ☐

7) Please indicate your department/section BEFORE the merger

Project Management ☐ Sales ☐ Service Management ☐ Solutions Department  
☐ Service Integration Management ☐ Marketing ☐ Commercial ☐ Partner  
Relations ☐ Product Management ☐ Other ☐

8) Please indicate your department/section AFTER the merger

Project Management ☐ Sales ☐ Service Management ☐ Solutions Department  
☐ Service Integration Management ☐ Marketing ☐ Commercial ☐ Partner  
Relations ☐ Product Management ☐ Other ☐

9) Please indicate a company you worked for BEFORE the merger

Telkom Business/Enterprise ☐ Business Connexion ☐

10) Are you a member of a union?

Yes ☐ No ☐

## SECTION 2 A: COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION BEFORE THE MERGER

### SECTION 2 A: Communication Satisfaction BEFORE THE MERGER

11) \* Think about communication which happened in your former company before merger and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements using the scales below:

	{1} Strongly Disagree	{2} Disagree	{3} Neutral	{4} Agree	{5} Strongly Agree
1. Employees received information about the merger before it could reach the media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Communication happened at the time when my views could still influence the situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Information shared with me by management was accurate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Information about the proposed merger was not clear to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Internal channels provided ways to get more information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The implications of the merger was communicated to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Most of the staff members were reluctant to accept this merger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I had a chance to hear many different views of the merger situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. The information I received was relevant to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Management assured me that my views will be listened to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Management abuse their power to make their authority felt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. The way management spoke to me showed considerateness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Management gave assurance that any new changes will be communicated to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Communication department advised top management on possible crisis merger not handled well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## SECTION 2 B: COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION DURING THE MERGER

### SECTION 2 B: Communication Satisfaction DURING THE MERGER

12) \* Think about communication which happened in the merged company during merger and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements using the scales below:

	{1} Strongly Disagree	{2} Disagree	{3} Neutral	{4} Agree	{5} Strongly Agree
1. I was given an opportunity to air my views during the merger process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Communication did not addressed cultural differences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I was afforded the opportunity to have further conversations with management after presentations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Internal communication channels provided regular updates to ensure that I have access to the latest information at all times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The implications of the merger was communicated to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Research was regularly conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Information communicated by management during the merger process was not consistent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Communication with my co-workers was reflective of what was happening at that time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Management took accountability for the communication messages shared during the merger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Management was aware of what employees should know about the merger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Customers and other stakeholders had a favourable response to the merger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## SECTION 2 C: COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION AFTER THE MERGER

### SECTION 2 C: Communication Satisfaction AFTER THE MERGER

13) \* Think about communication which happened in your company after merger and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements using the scales below:

	{1} Strongly Disagree	{2} Disagree	{3} Neutral	{4} Agree	{5} Strongly Agree
1. Management reported back on the outcome of the merger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Information shared after the merger seemed consistent with the one shared before the merger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Communication is no longer transparent after merger.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Management asked me how I feel about the new company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I identify with the new company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The branding of the merged company was appealing me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Employees are committed to being part of the new company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Management motivated staff members to achieve the objectives of the merged company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Internal communication channels were still accessible after the merger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Work instructions are clarified to enable me to do my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. The manner in which the merger was communicated improved my relationship with the new colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Communication covered the long-term strategy of the new company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. The new company has ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I believe nothing of value has been accomplished with merging these companies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. The former companies were merged without undermining what they can offer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. The way the merger was communicated enables me to have an open communication with top management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. The new company structure has negatively affected the way I work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. The new company structure makes reporting easy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. There is fairness in allocation of financial resources in the departments of merged company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Employee communication is an important part of my company's communication function	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. Communication among employees at different levels is encouraged	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## APPENDIX E: FREQUENCIES OF THE MERGER COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

**Table E.1:** Frequencies of the Before Merger Questionnaire

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Total
11.1: Employees received information about the merger before it could reach the media	11	20	22	38	10	101
	10.9%	19.8%	21.8%	37.6%	9.9%	100.0%
11.2: Communication happened at the time when my views could still influence the situation	23	34	27	9	8	101
	22.8%	33.7%	26.7%	8.9%	7.9%	100.0%
11.3: Information shared with me by management was accurate	18	26	32	20	5	101
	17.8%	25.7%	31.7%	19.9%	4.9%	100.0%
11.4: Information about the proposed merger was not clear to me [R]	18	37	21	15	10	101
	17.8%	36.6%	20.8%	14.9%	9.9%	100.0%
11.5: Internal channels provided ways to get more information	19	23	26	24	9	101
	18.8%	22.8%	25.7%	23.8%	8.9%	100.0%
11.6: The implications of the merger were communicated to me	19	31	22	21	8	101
	18.8%	30.7%	21.8%	20.8%	7.9%	100.0%
11.7: Most of the staff members were reluctant to accept this merger	6	2	17	37	39	101
	5.9%	2%	16.8%	36.6%	38.7%	100.0%
11.8: I had a chance to hear many different views of the merger situation	8	29	21	29	14	101
	7.9%	28.7%	20.8%	28.7%	13.9%	100.0%
11.9: The information I received was relevant to me	11	24	35	29	2	101
	10.9%	23.8%	34.6%	28.8%	1.9%	100.0%
11.10: Management assured me that my views will be listened to	17	32	24	23	5	101
	16.8%	31.7%	23.8%	22.8%	4.9%	100.0%
11.11: Management abuse their power to make their authority felt [R]	14	23	35	19	10	101
	13.9%	22.8%	34.6%	18.8%	9.9%	100.0%
11.12: The way management spoke to me showed considerateness	13	21	40	22	5	101
	12.9%	20.8%	39.6%	21.8%	4.9%	100.0%

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Total
11.13: Management gave assurance that any new changes will be communicated to me	11	22	24	38	6	101
	10.9%	21.8%	23.8%	37.6%	5.9%	100.0%
11.14: Communication department advised top management on possible crisis merger not handled well.	19	15	42	19	6	101
	18.8%	14.8%	41.7%	18.8%	5.9%	100.0%

**Table E.2:** Frequencies of the During Merger Questionnaire

12.1: I was given an opportunity to air my views during the merger process	22	37	21	18	3	101
	21.8%	36.7%	20.8%	17.8%	2.9%	100.0%
12.2: Communication did not address cultural differences [R]	26	36	27	8	4	101
	25.7%	35.7%	26.8%	7.9%	3.9%	100.0%
12.3: I was afforded the opportunity to have further conversations with management after presentations	18	35	22	22	4	101
	17.8%	34.7%	21.8%	21.8%	3.9%	100.0%
12.4: Internal communication channels provided regular updates to ensure that I have access to the latest information at all times	15	30	27	22	7	101
	14.8%	29.7%	26.8%	21.8%	6.9%	100.0%
12.5: The implications of the merger were communicated to me	16	32	27	23	3	101
	15.8%	31.7%	26.8%	22.8%	2.9%	100.0%
12.6: Research was regularly conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication.	25	38	24	10	4	101
	24.7%	37.7%	23.8%	9.9%	3.9%	100.0%
12.7: Information communicated by management during the merger process was not consistent	5	10	19	47	20	101
	4.9%	9.9%	18.8%	46.6%	19.8%	100.0%
12.8: Communication with my co-workers was reflective of what was happening at that time	4	15	18	51	13	101
	3.9%	14.9%	17.8%	50.5%	12.9%	100.0%
12.9: Management took accountability for the communication messages shared during the merger	11	35	32	18	5	101
	10.9%	34.6%	31.8%	17.8%	4.9%	100.0%
12.10: Management was aware of what employees should know about the merger	12	25	30	28	6	101
	11.9%	24.7%	29.8%	27.7%	5.9%	100.0%
12.11: Customers and other stakeholders had a favourable response to the merger	33	33	26	6	3	101
	32.7%	32.7%	25.7%	5.9%	2.9%	100.0%

**Table E.3: Frequencies of the After the Merger Questionnaire**

13.1: Management reported back on the outcome of the merger	13	21	19	42	6	101
	12.9%	20.8%	18.8%	41.6%	5.9%	100.0%
13.2: Information shared after the merger seemed consistent with the one shared before the merger	22	38	27	12	2	101
	21.8%	37.8%	26.7%	11.9%	1.9%	100.0%
13.3: Communication is no longer transparent after merger.	6	21	23	32	19	101
	5.9%	20.8%	22.7%	31.8%	18.8%	100.0%
13.4: Management asked me how I feel about the new company	25	37	24	12	3	101
	24.7%	36.7%	23.8%	11.9%	2.9%	100.0%
13.5: I identify with the new company	18	19	38	21	5	101
	17.8%	18.8%	37.7%	20.8%	4.9%	100.0%
13.6: The branding of the merged company was appealing me	17	18	35	22	9	101
	16.8%	17.8%	34.7%	21.8%	8.9%	100.0%
13.7: Employees are committed to being part of the new company	18	23	31	21	8	101
	17.8%	22.8%	30.7%	20.8%	7.9%	100.0%
13.8: Management motivated staff members to achieve the objectives of the merged company	13	20	19	40	9	101
	12.9%	19.8%	18.8%	39.6%	8.9%	100.0%
13.9: Internal communication channels were still accessible after the merger	13	26	33	25	4	101
	12.9%	25.7%	32.7%	24.5%	3.9%	100.0%
13.10: Work instructions are clarified to enable me to do my work	19	30	19	26	7	101
	18.8%	29.7%	18.8%	25.7%	6.9%	100.0%
13.11: The manner in which the merger was communicated improved my relationship with the new colleagues	17	37	30	11	6	101
	16.8%	36.7%	29.7%	10.9%	5.9%	100.0%
13.12: Communication covered the long-term strategy of the new company	12	29	35	19	6	101
	11.9%	28.7%	34.7%	18.8%	5.9%	100.0%
13.13: The new company has ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	11	20	40	23	7	101
	10.9%	19.8%	39.6%	22.8%	6.9%	100.0%
	5	16	33	27	20	101

13.14: I believe nothing of value has been accomplished with merging these companies	4.9%	15.8%	32.8%	26.7%	19.8%	100.0%
13.15: The former companies were merged without undermining what they can offer	11	19	41	17	13	101
	10.9%	18.8%	40.6%	16.8%	12.9%	100.0%
13.16: The way the merger was communicated enables me to have an open communication with top management	19	30	29	20	3	101
	18.8%	29.7%	28.8%	19.8%	2.9%	100.0%
13.17: The new company structure has negatively affected the way I work.	9	23	24	24	21	101
	8.9%	22.8%	23.8%	23.8%	20.8%	100.0%
13.18: The new company structure makes reporting easy	20	20	40	16	5	101
	19.8%	19.8%	39.7%	15.8%	4.9%	100.0%
13.19: There is fairness in allocation of financial resources in the departments of merged company	19	30	37	9	6	101
	18.8%	29.7%	36.7%	8.9%	5.9%	100.0%
13.20: Employee communication is an important part of my company's communication function	9	9	25	36	22	101
	8.9%	8.9%	24.8%	35.6%	21.8%	100.0%
13.21: Communication among employees at different levels is encouraged	11	14	28	35	13	101
	10.9%	13.9%	27.7%	34.6%	12.9%	100.0%

## APPENDIX F: ITEM INTERCORRELATION MATRIX OF THE MERGER COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

The results of the item inter-correlation matrix for Before the Merger Questionnaire are indicated in Table F.1 below.

**Table F.1:** Item inter-correlation matrix for Before the Merger Questionnaire ( $n=101$ )

	11.1	11.2	11.3	11.4	11.5	11.6	11.7	11.8	11.9	11.10	11.11	11.12	11.13	11.14
11.1: Employees received information about the merger before it could reach the media	1,000													
11.2: Communication happened at the time when my views could still influence the situation	,432	1,000												
11.3: Information shared with me by management was accurate	,420	,450	1,000											
11.4: Information about the proposed merger was not clear to me	-,173	-,302	-,115	1,000										
11.5: Internal channels provided ways to get more information	,530	,518	,532	-,242	1,000									
11.6: The implications of the merger was communicated to me	,471	,499	,548	-,187	,590	1,000								
11.7: Most of the staff members were reluctant to accept this merger	-,008	-,118	-,285	,188	-,214	-,158	1,000							
11.8: I had a chance to hear many different views of the merger situation	,064	,217	,256	-,037	,222	,298	-,115	1,000						

11.9: The information I received was relevant to me	,334	,361	,538	-,202	,549	,546	-,371	,454	1,000					
11.10: Management assured me that my views will be listened to	,407	,349	,389	-,182	,543	,352	-,216	,289	,477	1,000				
11.11: Management abuse their power to make their authority felt	-,231	-,310	-,327	,318	-,403	-,239	,268	-,039	-,366	-,388	1,000			
11.12: The way management spoke to me showed considerateness	,394	,377	,577	-,249	,651	,494	-,234	,249	,584	,590	-,461	1,000		
11.13 Management gave assurance that any new changes will be communicated to me	,330	,289	,477	-,226	,576	,354	-,244	,113	,564	,523	-,361	,691	1,000	
11.14: Communication department advised top management on possible crisis merger not handled well.	-,004	,188	,187	,024	,147	,079	,089	,283	,114	,335	-,191	,255	,174	1,000

The item inter-correlation ( $r$ ) calculations as reflected in Table F.1 above show that some correlations between the majority of the items are  $r = .3$  or greater that are a requirement for factor analysis (Pallant, 2016:158)



**Table F.2:** Item inter-correlation matrix for During the Merger Questionnaire ( $n=101$ )

Questions	12.1	12.2	12.3	12.4	12.5	12.6	12.7	12.8	12.9	12.10	12.11
12.1: I was given an opportunity to air my views during the merger process	1,000	,031	,572	,408	,507	,424	-,333	,163	,334	,380	,468
12.2: Communication did not addressed cultural differences	,031	1,000	-,123	-,145	,008	-,071	,411	,244	-,148	-,064	-,045
12.3: I was afforded the opportunity to have further conversations with management after presentations	,572	-,123	1,000	,619	,614	,514	-,423	,301	,527	,415	,490
12.4: Internal communication channels provided regular updates to ensure that I have access to the latest information at all times	,408	-,145	,619	1,000	,631	,621	-,383	,335	,638	,541	,575
12.5: The implications of the merger was communicated to me	,507	,008	,614	,631	1,000	,553	-,301	,266	,545	,476	,528
12.6: Research was regularly conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication.	,424	-,071	,514	,621	,553	1,000	-,365	,185	,597	,566	,624
12.7: Information communicated by management during the merger process was not consistent	-,333	,411	-,423	-,383	-,301	-,365	1,000	-,017	-,350	-,305	-,365
12.8: Communication with my co-workers was reflective of what was happening at that time	,163	,244	,301	,335	,266	,185	-,017	1,000	,145	,217	,052
12.9: Management took accountability for the communication messages shared during the merger	,334	-,148	,527	,638	,545	,597	-,350	,145	1,000	,684	,489
12.10: Management was aware of what employees should know about the merger	,380	-,064	,415	,541	,476	,566	-,305	,217	,684	1,000	,391
12.11: Customers and other stakeholders had a favourable response to the merger	,468	-,045	,490	,575	,528	,624	-,365	,052	,489	,391	1,000

The item inter-correlation ( $r$ ) calculations as reflected in Table F.2 above show that some correlations between the majority of the items are  $r = .3$  or greater that are a requirement for factor analysis (Pallant, 2016:158)

**Table F.3:** Item inter-correlation matrix for After the Merger Questionnaire ( $n=101$ )

Questions	13.1	13.2	13.3	13.4	13.5	13.6	13.7	13.8	13.9	13.10
13.1: Management reported back on the outcome of the merger	1,000									
13.2: Information shared after the merger seemed consistent with the one shared before the merger	,709	1,000								
13.3: Communication is no longer transparent after merger.	-,227	-,241	1,000							
13.4: Management asked me how I feel about the new company	,532	,406	-,212	1,000						
13.5 :I identify with the new company	,360	,441	-,182	,497	1,000					
13.6: The branding of the merged company was appealing me	,525	,488	-,096	,516	,649	1,000				
13.7: Employees are committed to being part of the new company	,508	,557	-,176	,423	,549	,542	1,000			
13.8: Management motivated staff members to achieve the objectives of the merged company	,408	,463	-,276	,381	,403	,446	,577	1,000		
13.9: Internal communication channels were still accessible after the merger	,651	,584	-,174	,436	,393	,489	,512	,548	1,000	
13.10: Work instructions are clarified to enable me to do my work	,495	,533	-,074	,204	,442	,493	,507	,511	,503	1,000
13.11: The manner in which the merger was communicated improved my relationship with the new colleagues	,395	,589	-,027	,279	,465	,505	,514	,387	,369	,454

13.12: Communication covered the long-term strategy of the new company		,590	,520	-,102	,515	,346	,385	,523	,420	,528	,475
13.13: The new company has ability to accomplish what it says it will do.		,360	,476	-,175	,434	,572	,590	,608	,591	,504	,580
13.14: I believe nothing of value has been accomplished with merging these companies		-,173	-,247	,294	-,142	-,358	-,344	-,253	-,117	-,110	-,170
13.15: The former companies were merged without undermining what they can offer		,228	,294	,024	,166	,306	,177	,250	,149	,254	,350
13.16: The way the merger was communicated enables me to have an open communication with top management		,587	,679	-,275	,412	,592	,618	,486	,436	,510	,490
13.17: The new company structure has negatively affected the way I work.		-,300	-,332	,373	-,229	-,337	-,278	-,392	-,228	-,171	-,243
13.18: The new company structure makes reporting easy		,505	,599	-,171	,410	,510	,578	,581	,511	,572	,592
13.19: There is fairness in allocation of financial resources in the departments of merged company		,450	,522	-,123	,293	,401	,305	,485	,439	,552	,487
13.20: Employee communication is an important part of my company's communication function		,410	,321	-,146	,428	,207	,270	,306	,387	,399	,353
13.21: Communication among employees at different levels is encouraged		,557	,656	-,289	,438	,422	,469	,585	,617	,574	,488
<b>Questions</b>	<b>13.11</b>	<b>13.12</b>	<b>13.13</b>	<b>13.14</b>	<b>13.15</b>	<b>13.16</b>	<b>13.17</b>	<b>13.18</b>	<b>13.19</b>	<b>13.20</b>	<b>13.21</b>
13.11: The manner in which the merger was communicated improved my relationship with the new colleagues	1,000										
13.12: Communication covered the long-term strategy of the new company	,358	1,000									

13.13: The new company has ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	,506	,565	1,000								
13.14: I believe nothing of value has been accomplished with merging these companies	-,169	-,175	-,315	1,000							
13.15: The former companies were merged without undermining what they can offer	,265	,214	,171	,032	1,000						
13.16: The way the merger was communicated enables me to have an open communication with top management	,615	,533	,535	-,332	,221	1,000					
13.17: The new company structure has negatively affected the way I work.	-,161	-,276	-,352	,378	-,058	-,407	1,000				
13.18: The new company structure makes reporting easy	,429	,472	,672	-,273	,169	,595	-,442	1,000			
13.19: There is fairness in allocation of financial resources in the departments of merged company	,347	,411	,506	-,106	,305	,433	-,214	,523	1,000		
13.20: Employee communication is an important part of my company's communication function	,211	,373	,413	-,146	,234	,353	-,147	,376	,347	1,000	
13.21: Communication among employees at different levels is encouraged	,430	,502	,596	-,280	,299	,606	-,356	,558	,523	,542	1,000

The item inter-correlation ( $r$ ) calculations as reflected in Table F.3 above show that some correlations between the majority of the items are  $r = .3$  or greater that are a requirement for factor analysis (Pallant, 2016:158)

## APPENDIX G: FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE BEFORE THE MERGER QUESTIONNAIRE

The results of the item inter-correlation matrix for Before the Merger Questionnaire are indicated in Table G.1 below.

**Table G.1:** Eigenvalues of the Unreduced Item Inter-correlation Matrix of Before the Merger Questionnaire ( $n = 101$ )

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5,544	39,599	39,599
2	1,314	9,385	48,984
3	1,196	8,544	57,528
4	1,090	7,783	65,311
5	,948	6,771	72,082
6	,705	5,036	77,118
7	,595	4,252	81,370
8	,548	3,917	85,287
9	,452	3,226	88,513
10	,414	2,959	91,472
11	,350	2,497	93,969
12	,336	2,399	96,369
13	,271	1,934	98,302
14	,238	1,698	100,000

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.*

The above Table G.1 shows that four factors can be, from the Before the Merger Questionnaire items according to Kaiser's (1970) criterion (Eigenvalues larger than unity), explaining about 65% of the variance in the factor space. A factor matrix was calculated, that show the related extracted communalities, for the Before the Merger Questionnaire as presented in Table G.2 below.

**Table G.2:** Factor Matrix and Communalities Extracted for the Before the Merger Questionnaire ( $n = 101$ )

Items	Factors				Extracted communalities
	1	2	3	4	
11.1: Employees received information about the merger before it could reach the media	,882				0,69
11.6: The implications of the merger was communicated to me	,837				0,70
11.2: Communication happened at the time when my views could still influence the situation	,708				0,52
11.5: Internal channels provided ways to get more information	,699				0,71
11.3: Information shared with me by management was accurate	,604				0,58
11.12: The way management spoke to me showed considerateness	,426			,403	0,71
11.8: I had a chance to hear many different views of the merger situation		,645	-,356	,310	0,70
11.4: Information about the proposed merger was not clear to me		-,565			0,42
11.11: Management abuse their power to make their authority felt		-,554		,380	0,61
11.7: Most of the staff members were reluctant to accept this merger			,902		0,76
11.9: The information I received was relevant to me	,431		-,568		0,74
11.14: Communication department advised top management on possible crisis merger not handled well.				,943	0,81
11.10: Management assured me that my views will be listened to				,547	0,61
11.13: Management gave assurance that any new changes will be communicated to me	,305			,336	0,58

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.*

*Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.*

*Rotation converged in 21 iterations.*

The Iterative Reliability Analysis for Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 1 Scale is presented in Table G3 below.

Table G.3: Iterative Reliability Analysis for the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 1 Scale

	<b>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</b>	<b>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</b>	<b>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</b>	<b>Squared Multiple Correlation</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</b>
11.1: Employees received information about the merger before it could reach the media	13,485	21,112	,574	,344	,846
11.6: The implications of the merger was communicated to me	13,960	19,838	,678	,466	,826
11.2: Communication happened at the time when my views could still influence the situation	14,188	21,094	,583	,359	,844
11.5: Internal channels provided ways to get more information	13,832	19,081	,743	,583	,813
11.3: Information shared with me by management was accurate	13,960	20,738	,652	,453	,831
11.12: The way management spoke to me showed considerateness	13,792	21,286	,645	,501	,833
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Std.</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>,857</b>		<b>16,644</b>	<b>28,732</b>	<b>5,3602</b>	<b>6</b>

The result obtained from the iterative reliability analysis of the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 1 Scale yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .85, indicating an acceptable reliability (Pallant, 2016). The Iterative Reliability Analysis for the Factor 2 Scale is presented in Table G4 below.

**Table G.4: Iterative Reliability Analysis for the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 2 Scale**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
11.8 I had a chance to hear many different views of the merger situation	5,505	3,772	,047	,002	,482
11.4: Information about the proposed merger was not clear to me [R]	6,000	2,920	,244	,102	.074
11.11: Management abuse their power to make their authority felt [R]	5,743	3,053	,249	,102	.072
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Std.</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>.311</b>		<b>8,624</b>	<b>5,437</b>	<b>2,3317</b>	<b>3</b>

The result obtained from the iterative reliability analysis of the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 2 Scale yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .311, indicating an unacceptable reliability (Pallant, 2016).

*Communication Satisfaction Factor 3 Scale:* The Iterative Reliability Analysis for the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 3 Scale was not conducted as the factor yielded cross loadings. The Iterative Reliability Analysis for the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 4 Scale is presented in Table G5 below.



**Table G.5: Iterative Reliability Analysis for the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 4 Scale**

	<b>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</b>	<b>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</b>	<b>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</b>	<b>Squared Multiple Correlation</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</b>
11.14: Communication department advised top management on possible crisis merger not handled well.	5,733	3,958	,292	,112	,687
11.10: Management assured me that my views will be listened to	5,842	3,015	,560	,335	,296
11.13: Management gave assurance that any new changes will be communicated to me	5,455	3,490	,428	,274	,502
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Std.</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>,612</b>		<b>8,515</b>	<b>6,572</b>	<b>2,5636</b>	<b>3</b>

The result obtained from the iterative reliability analysis of the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 4 Scale yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .61, indicating an unacceptable reliability. Based on these findings above it was decided to reject the factor analysis for the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction and conduct the Iterative Reliability Analysis on all the items of the Before the Merger Questionnaire. The results for the Iterative Reliability Analysis for the Before the Merger Communication Satisfaction Scale is reported Chapter 5 paragraph 4.3.4 of the study

## APPENDIX H: FACTOR ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION DURING THE MERGER QUESTIONNAIRE

The results of the item inter-correlation matrix for During the Merger Questionnaire are indicated in Table H.1 below.

**Table H.1:** Eigenvalues of the Unreduced Item Inter-correlation Matrix of the During the Merger Questionnaire ( $n = 101$ )

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5,055	45,955	45,955
2	1,449	13,173	59,128
3	,880	8,003	67,131
4	,867	7,881	75,012
5	,594	5,398	80,410
6	,532	4,833	85,243
7	,413	3,751	88,994
8	,357	3,249	92,243
9	,334	3,037	95,279
10	,272	2,474	97,753
11	,247	2,247	100,000

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.*

The above Table H.1 shows that two factors can be postulated from the During the Merger Questionnaire items according to Kaiser's (1970) criterion (Eigenvalues larger than unity), explaining about 59% of the variance in the factor space. A factor matrix was calculated, that show the related extracted communalities, for During the Merger Questionnaire as presented in Table H.2 below.

**Table H.2:** Factor Matrix and Communalities Extracted for During the Merger Questionnaire ( $n = 101$ )

Items	Factors		Extracted Communalities
	1	2	
12.4: Internal communication channels provided regular updates to ensure that I have access to the latest information at all times	,835		0,70
12.6: Research was regularly conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication.	,794		0,63
12.5: The implications of the merger was communicated to me	,793		0,64
12.3: I was afforded the opportunity to have further conversations with management after presentations	,787		0,62
12.9: Management took accountability for the communication messages shared during the merger	,776		0,62
12.11: Customers and other stakeholders had a favourable response to the merger	,726		0,54
12.10: Management was aware of what employees should know about the merger	,719		0,52
12.1: I was given an opportunity to air my views during the merger process	,654		0,43
12.2 Communication did not addressed cultural differences [R]		-,845	0,73
12.8: Communication with my co-workers was reflective of what was happening at that time	,351	,621	0,50
12.7: Information communicated by management during the merger process was not consistent	-,511	,555	0,58

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.*

*Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.*

*Rotation converged in 4 iterations.*

The results for the Iterative Reliability Analysis for the During the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 1 Scale are reported Chapter 5 paragraph 4.3.4 of the study.

**Table H.3:** Iterative Reliability Analysis for the During the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 2

	<b>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</b>	<b>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</b>	<b>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</b>	<b>Squared Multiple Correlation</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</b>
12.2: Communication did not address cultural differences [R]	7,198	2,140	-,468	,231	-.034 <sup>a</sup>
12.8: Communication with my co-workers was reflective of what was happening at that time	5,950	1,328	-,240	,076	-1.393 <sup>a</sup>
12.7: Information communicated by management during the merger process was not consistent	5,822	1,648	-,353	,183	-.643 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>-1,234</b>		<b>9,485</b>	<b>1,812</b>	<b>1,3462</b>	<b>3</b>

The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items that violates reliability model assumptions. The error was address by using a normal score version of question 12.8 without any success.

## APPENDIX I: FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE AFTER THE MERGER QUESTIONNAIRE

The results of the item inter-correlation matrix for After the Merger Questionnaire are indicated in Table H.1 below.

**Table H.1:** Eigenvalues of the Unreduced Item Inter-Correlation Matrix of the After the Merger Questionnaire ( $n = 101$ )

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9,266	44,123	44,123
2	1,583	7,537	51,660
3	1,243	5,921	57,581
4	,995	4,737	62,318
5	,949	4,518	66,837
6	,881	4,193	71,030
7	,758	3,610	74,640
8	,730	3,475	78,115
9	,627	2,985	81,100
10	,560	2,665	83,765
11	,552	2,628	86,392
12	,494	2,352	88,744
13	,387	1,843	90,587
14	,351	1,670	92,257
15	,331	1,576	93,833
16	,287	1,365	95,198
17	,277	1,319	96,517
18	,245	1,167	97,683
19	,192	,915	98,598
20	,161	,765	99,362

21	,134	,638	100,000
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*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.*

The above Table I.1 shows that three factors can be postulated, from the After the Merger Measure items according to Kaiser's (1970) criterion (Eigenvalues larger than unity), explaining about 57% of the variance in the factor space. A factor matrix was calculated, that show the related extracted communalities, for the After the Merger Questionnaire as presented in Table I.2 below.

**Table I.2:** Factor Matrix and Communalities Extracted for the After the Merger Questionnaire ( $n = 101$ )

Items	Factor			Extracted communalities
	1	2	3	
13.20: Employee communication is an important part of my company's communication function	,803			0,50
13.9: Internal communication channels were still accessible after the merger	,766			0,65
13.1: Management reported back on the outcome of the merger	,747			0,62
13.21: Communication among employees at different levels is encouraged	,727			0,68
13.12: Communication covered the long-term strategy of the new company	,649			0,52
13.8: Management motivated staff members to achieve the objectives of the merged company	,622			0,51
13.19: There is fairness in allocation of financial resources in the departments of merged company	,604			0,49
13.4: Management asked me how I feel about the new company	,580			0,42
13.2: Information shared after the merger seemed consistent with the one shared before the merger	,557		,340	0,63
13.3: Communication is no longer transparent after merger.	-,372	,710		0,62
13.14: I believe nothing of value has been accomplished with merging these companies		,607	-,479	0,58
13.17: The new company structure has negatively affected the way I work.		,607		0,55

13.15: The former companies were merged without undermining what they can offer		,410		0,32
13.5: I identify with the new company			,783	0,66
13.11: The manner in which the merger was communicated improved my relationship with the new colleagues			,731	0,61
13.6: The branding of the merged company was appealing me			,726	0,65
13.16: The way the merger was communicated enables me to have an open communication with top management	,340		,545	0,66
13.13: The new company has ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	,360		,529	0,63
13.7: Employees are committed to being part of the new company	,394		,482	0,60
13.10:10. Work instructions are clarified to enable me to do my work	,394		,463	0,57
13.18: The new company structure makes reporting easy	,421		,462	0,63

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.*

*Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.*

*Rotation converged in 22 iterations.*

The results obtained from the iterative reliability analysis of the After the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 2 are presented in Table I.3 below.

**Table I.3: Iterative Reliability Analysis: After the Merger Communication Satisfaction Factor 2**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
13.3: Communication is no longer transparent after merger.	9,673	5,182	,365	,168	,287
13.14: I believe nothing of value has been accomplished with merging these companies	9,634	5,334	,374	,172	,285
13.15: The former companies were merged without undermining what they can offer	10,020	7,240	-,003	,008	,616

13.17: The new company structure has negatively affected the way I work.	9,792	4,906	,360	,223	,284
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Std.</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>.46</b>		13.04	8.54	2.92	4

The result obtained from the iterative reliability analysis of the Communication Satisfaction after the Merger Scale 2 (measured by four items) yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .46, indicating unacceptable internal consistency reliability (DeCoster & Claypool, 2004; Pallant, 2016). This scale was excluded from further statistical calculations.



## APPENDIX J: EDITING CERTIFICATE



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30 APRIL 2020

I hereby confirm that I have proof-read, formatted, and  
edited the style, layout, references and language of the

**Master of arts in Communication Dissertation**

**to be submitted to**

**UNISA**

**by**

**DIKGALE PULENG DAVID**

**Entitled**

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION AT A MERGED SOUTH  
AFRICAN ORGANISATION: A MIXED-METHODS APPROACH**

(163 pages, 48 371 words)

Note: The edited work described here may not be identical to that submitted. The author, at  
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## APPENDIX K: STATISTICIAN AGREEMENT



### Confidentiality Agreement: Statistician

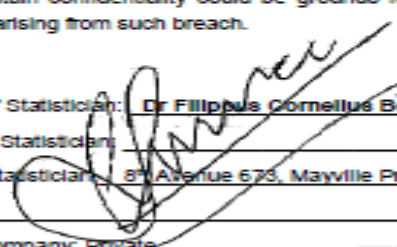
This is to certify that I, Filippus Cornelius Bothma, the statistician of the research project '*A critical analysis of the role of communication at a merged South African company: a mixed-method approach*' agree to the responsibilities of the statistical analysis of the data obtained from participants (and additional tasks the researcher(s) may require in my capacity as statistician).

I acknowledge that the research project is conducted by **Puleng David Dikgale** of the College of Human Science (CHS), University of South Africa.

I understand that any information (written, verbal or any other form) obtained during the performance of my duties must remain confidential and in line with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics. This includes all information about participants, their employees/their employers/their organisation, as well as any other information.

I understand that any unauthorised release or carelessness in the handling of this confidential information is considered a breach of the duty to maintain confidentiality. I further understand that any breach of the duty to maintain confidentiality could be grounds for immediate dismissal and/or possible liability in any legal action arising from such breach.

Full Name of Statistician: Dr Philippus Cornelius Bothma

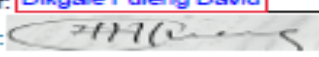
Signature of Statistician:  Date: 12 April 2019

Address of statistician: 8th Avenue 673, Mayville Pretoria

Statistical Company: Private

Any Job/reference number \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Primary Researcher: Dikgale Puleng David

Signature of Primary Researcher:  Date: 15 April 2019



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